

# **A History of Sowood Farm**

## **Ossett**



**Alan Howe**

**January 2013**



## SOWOOD FARM OSSETT

### Preface

Sowood Farm stands on the eastern side of the B6184 road from Ossett to Horbury in West Yorkshire. Situated on the very boundary dividing the two towns, the Farm owes its long history to its location. The Manor of Wakefield Court rolls refer to Sowood, or Southwood, as early as 1277 and other references from the same source reveal that over the centuries the farm played several important roles in the workings of the Manor.

In 1988 Sowood Farmhouse was granted Grade II listed building status. Its importance as an ancient building in the landscape of the town was properly recognised at that time but its history is worth less without a knowledge and understanding of the lives of the families who lived and worked there.

This account of the history of Sowood Farm began in June 2012 with the usual patchy information; a collection of vague memories, unusual names, anecdotes and family lore. Each may have had a rather hollow ring on first hearing but each bore a seed of truth which led to important findings regarding the history of the Farm. In addition there was a date stone and a few thoughts from the late Horbury historian Ken Bartlett which tempted further investigation. Thrown in with the wonders of 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology now available to the genealogist and historian this proved to be a powerful mixture which revealed the history of the Farmstead in a way which would not have been possible at any time in the past.

There are twists and turns a many in the history of the Sowood Farm and of the larger Sowood area which was once a Manor in its own right. Some notes and reflections on the wider Manor of Sowood area are included in a companion publication "*Sowood Manor – A Collection of Historical References*" by the same writer.

The history of the farm is inextricably linked with that of the Marsden family who built, or re-built, much more than a stone Farmhouse. Marsden family links to the Nettletons and the Brooks, who took over the working of the Farm in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century are also recorded. Such though was the influence of the Marsden settlers in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century on parts of Sowood and Storrs Hill that the history also includes references to their other holdings and houses in the vicinity. There is more about the Marsden family in companion histories *The History of the Rocks- Rock Cottages- Storrs Hill Ossett* and *The Old Halfway House Horbury & Matty Marsden Lane* by the same writer.

Not everyone who has an interest in the history of Ossett and Sowood may wish to dwell long on the detail of the findings and so the narrative provides both a summary of the history and, an even shorter, "bite size" timeline which lists the major events affecting the Farmstead over the years. But the efforts of those who came before I called, and those who still live and work at Sowood Farm, deserve much more than a summary of their lives and a full stop of a timeline.

Consequently I have also committed to paper something of their lives. The Farmstead and its owners and occupiers deserve no less. I don't doubt that there will be some mistakes made in the text and the history along the way but I hope that the reader will forgive me for these. History doesn't change, but what we find of it does as new sources are discovered. I hope that the reader will discover something of interest in this History of Sowood Farm.

Alan Howe

January 2013

## Acknowledgements

For more than 300 years Sowood Farm has been an important landmark in the physical and social fabric of Ossett, Horbury and Sowood. It deserves time to be spent on its history and this study has taken time. The research began in May 2012 and would have taken much longer were it not for the help, support and guidance of many of my Ossett history friends and colleagues.

I met Richard Glover in a field in 2005 whilst he was researching his splendid "Medieval and Post Medieval Landscape of Ossett Township" This is an essential reference work for anyone contemplating studying or writing about Ossett's history . This history of Sowood Farm has drawn upon much of the research undertaken by him and his book has been a constant reference source. I am grateful too to David and Deborah Scriven and to Ruth Nettleton for their patience in listening to my periodic updates about this and other Sowood histories. Their gentle encouragement in suggesting other works of reference has provided much more assistance than I suspect they realise. Ruth Nettleton has also shared with me the history of her family and several items from her family records are included in this history

I am indebted too to Joan Patricia Smith for her "South Ossett Triangle " which has been of great assistance in the identification and whereabouts of several Marsdens involved in the history of South Ossett and Sowood Farm. I also acknowledge her foresight, leadership and endeavours, and those of many others, in transcribing local parish records of births, marriages and burials. Genealogists and historians alike should pause to consider how their endeavours have been eased by these unsung heroes. Without their work it is certain that this history would not have been written.

I suspect that if Sowood Farm had been situated fifty yards or so further south – in Horbury rather than in Ossett - its history would have been known much sooner for the late Horbury historian Ken Bartlett would surely have discovered more of its secrets. As it is his collected works - *Wakefield & Horbury* - has been a major source of information in the research of the early Marsdens in Sowood, Horbury and Storrs Hill. He knew that the Marsdens lived at Sowood Farm when others did not.

As ever I am indebted to the staff of the West Yorkshire Archives Service for their help and advice. They are the custodians of a resource which must continue to be cherished. I am also obliged for the encouragement and assistance offered by English Heritage and the Council for British Archaeology.

I am grateful too to the Brook family for sharing many of their personal memories and mementos of their home at Sowood Farm. My particular thanks are due to Dora Brook, her sister Bessie Walker (nee Brook) and Bessie's husband, Eric Walker. Eric had already undertaken research on the Brook's family history which has been invaluable in writing the 20<sup>th</sup> Century history of the Farm. Most of all this history would not have been possible without the support and assistance given by Mrs Dorothy Brook and her children, Christine Burnell (nee Brook) and Peter Brook. My frequent calling upon them whilst they were busy with their work at the Farm has always been met with courtesy, patience and another snippet of information to be woven into this story of Sowood Farm.

Finally it would be remiss of me were I not to acknowledge the immense patience and understanding of my wife and family who have carried on their lives around me for the last six months or so.

Alan Howe

January 2013

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction and Summary</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Sowood Farm Timeline 1277-2013</b>		<b>12</b>
<b>Famine, Pestilence and War</b>	<b>1300 – 1600</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Marsdens</b>	<b>1676 – 1797</b>	<b>25</b>
- Francis (1651-1718) the builder of Sowood Farmhouse in 1689		26
- John (1674-1735)		34
- John (1704-1742)		43
- Francis (1731 – 1765)		45
- Francis (1762 - 1792)		48
- John (1764-1797)		50
<b>The Nettletons &amp; John Scholefield</b>	<b>1798 - 1903</b>	<b>57</b>
- The Sowood Stone – The Jackson family	72	
<b>The Brook Family of Sowood Farm</b>	<b>1896 – 2013</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Grade II Listing Building Documentation</b>		<b>87</b>



## Introduction and Summary

### 1300-1676 Controversy, The Dentons and The Black Death

Above the front door of Sowood Farm house is a datestone which carries the letters "FM" and the date 1689 but there is evidence<sup>1</sup> that the farmstead is much older even than this. If we are to believe this evidence then in the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century the farm was undergoing significant changes and not all were successful.

Between 1277 and 1709 the Manor of Sowood is variously referred to as *Sowewode*, *Southwood Green*, *Soutwode* and *Southwode* which means 'south wood' and derives from Old English *Su* and *wudu*. The Manor had been acquired, by purchase or grant, by Sir John de Horbury in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or the very early 14<sup>th</sup> century possibly at the time he acquired the Manor of Horbury in 1302. Some sources<sup>2</sup> believe that the 1689 house, which stands there today, was constructed on the site of a former manor house and that beams from that structure, which would have been of timber construction, were used in the building of the present farmhouse.

Sir John de Horbury's tenure of the Manor was short lived and he died before 1304 when the Manor reverted to the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl de Warenne. Records show that the Manor appointed new staff to operate the farm and during the period 1304-1323 it seems likely that it became a mixed arable and livestock *demesne*<sup>3</sup> farm of the Manor. During this period the farm was growing crops including oats and wheat and making hay and raising sheep and other animals for the Lord of the Manor's table. This was the period of the Great Famine in England and not all went well at the Farm with evidence of malpractice and poor administration. By 1323 the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield had tired of Sowood and it was leased to Thomas Aleyn.

In 1336 Aleyn sold the Manor to William de Scargill who died of the plague in 1349 and by 1363 it was in the hands of William de Gargrave. Whilst war raged in 1462 in the War of The Roses at nearby Sandal Castle and again in the Civil War of 1642, little of *local* significance appears to have happened at Sowood for the next 200 years or so. Then, on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1585 at the Manor of Wakefield Tourn<sup>4</sup> held at Wakefield .....*Christopher Denton did not make his part of Sowodd lone gate: amerced 4d.*<sup>5</sup> The "gate" may have been a structure but was more likely to be a path or roadway – a gateway - between the nearby towns of Horbury and Ossett. Even in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Sowood Farmstead included land on the east and west of *Denton Lane* such that the road between Horbury and Ossett, Denton Lane, ran through it.

The 1585 reference places Christopher Denton at Sowood Farm in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century and for the next 300 years or so if you wanted to go to the Farm from Horbury or from Ossett you would do so by taking the lane to *Denton's House*. This lane subsequently became Denton Lane and was the street address of Sowood Farm well into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Sowood Farm would have earlier and later owners and occupiers than Christopher Denton but the significance of his lasting legacy in the name of the road which led to 'Denton's House' can be found in 1593. In the late summer of this year Christopher Denton, seven of his family and five others in the locality fell victims to the Plague, The Black Death, and died within days of contracting the virulent disease.

---

<sup>1</sup> West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey to A.D 1500 M.L. Faul & S.A. Moorhouse 1981 page 471

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. There is another contender for the location of an earlier Manor House. This was built on Storrs Hill Road in 1684 and demolished in 1959. See "Sowood Manor A collection of historical references" (Alan Howe 2013)

<sup>3</sup> Demesne – operated by the Lord of the Manor for his own use.

<sup>4</sup> Tourn Local criminal court presided over by the sherriff

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Denton did not repair his section of Sowood Lane roadway to Horbury/Ossett & was fined 4d

All were buried in unconsecrated ground at Denton's House in Sowood. One of those Plague victims was Joanye Brouke who was buried at Denton's House on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1593. 300 years later the Brook family, almost certainly descendents of Joanye's family, became tenants, and later, owners of Sowood Farm.

No doubt it took some considerable time for the farm to recover from this episode in its history. The Denton family was decimated by the Plague and the farm almost certainly would have seen new owners and/or occupiers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It may however have been an unattractive prospect for potential purchasers or tenants and the farm may have fallen further into decline.

If, as some believe, a timber manor house once stood on the site then, if it survived into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it may have been in poor condition. Even if this was not the case there would be a farmhouse here which may have been timber built and in poor condition due to its age and, perhaps, even derelict following the tragic events at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It was time for a change for Sowood Farm.

### **1676-1797 The Marsdens – Re-building, Stability and Early Deaths**

In 1676 **Francis Marsden (1651-1718)** of Middlecliffe, Thurlstone, near Penistone, in South Yorkshire acquired the copyhold interest in the messuage *called Sowood, or Sowood House*, from Thomas Purdue, gentleman, of Pudsey. The circumstances by which Purdue came to possess the farm is uncertain but in October 1670 he married Priscilla Rayner at Bradford Cathedral. Rayner is a long established Horbury family name and it may be that Priscilla came from this family and that the Rayners owned the Sowood Farm copyhold interest from sometime earlier in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is clear from the 1676 Wakefield Manor Court Roll<sup>6</sup> that Thomas Purdue was not working the farm and associated land himself because the house was tenanted by Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh and the land was being worked by Edmund Lord or his assigns. The 1676 Court Roll is the earliest evidence to emerge of the property and land being called Sowood. During most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Marsden and Nettleton owners and occupiers were described as being of Storrs Hill<sup>7</sup>.

The 1672 Hearth Tax for Ossett records that Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh were charged tax on one "chimney" each suggesting that the dwelling, which preceded the existing farmhouse, may have been divided to provide accommodation for two families. In 1657 *Edmund Lord of Sowood* buried his son William at Horbury which suggests that he may have been at the Farm by 1657. His first child was born in May 1648 and whilst the record does not refer to him as being of Sowood it is possible that he lived at the Farm as early as 1647/48 which is a mere 50 years or so after the earlier Denton owners/occupiers died of the Black Death.

The 1676 Court Roll provides evidence that a dwelling stood at Sowood in that year and that it was known as *Sowood House*. By the early 1680's Francis Marsden, his wife Ann (nee Tinker) and their three children –all baptised at Penistone - had journeyed the 20 miles from Penistone parish to Ossett. The family came to work Sowood Farm and its 30 acres – to the east, west, north and south of the farm - and they also rented "*a farm under Storrs Hill*" from the Beatson family. In total the holding was probably close to 80-100 acres. There is no record of the Marsden family in the locality before 1680 but the Beatsons are recorded in Dewsbury as early as 1563 and in Horbury in 1599 – shortly after the Sowood Plague which may be significant. It is also likely that the families knew one

---

<sup>6</sup> The entry refers to a "messuage" in the singular suggesting it was a single dwelling – perhaps divided

<sup>7</sup> This is likely to be because the majority of the land worked from the Farm was situated at Storrs Hill



another since each had occupied New Hall Farm at Overton; the Marsdens between 1615-1651 and the Beatsons during most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Francisci and Ann Marsden had three more children in the 1680's, all baptised at Dewsbury, and by 1709 Francis is recorded as having a messuage and lands on Sowood Green<sup>8</sup>. The messuage<sup>9</sup> was Sowood Farm which Francis Marsden built, or rebuilt, in 1689 when he left his mark on the datestone, *FM 1689*, above the door so that all could see he had arrived and meant to stay.

Church records in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century record the 1696 death at Horbury of *Richard Marsdin of Sawid greene* who probably came to the locality with his brother Francisci in about 1680. In 1699 Francisci's eldest daughter Mary married a wealthy local man, William Pollard of Hallcliffe and in 1704 at Dewsbury his next daughter Elizabetha married *John Illingworth*. The Marsdens were already marrying well. It is clear too that whilst Francis was baptised at Penistone he had close links with families in the Holme Valley and Wooldale areas around Holmfirth and Scholes. Francis Marsden died in 1718, aged about 67 and a widower since his wife's death the year before. In accordance with the primogeniture custom of the time Sowood Farm and other copyhold landholdings were left to his son Johannes or John Marsden (1674- 1735), the eldest of his two sons.

**John Marsden (1674-1735)** married twice and had ten children and when he died, aged 61, in 1735 he left a Will which included an inventory of his belongings in his farm at Sowood. It is certain that he lived at Sowood since his Will also refers to the names of the fields adjacent to the Sowood Farmstead; names which were recorded in the 1676 Court Roll, and again, almost 170 years later, in the 1843 Ossett Tithe Award map. Most of these field names continued to be used to describe locations and ownership into the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. John's estates at Storrs Hill and at Sowood Farm (subject to a life interest in the east parlour of the house to his widow) were left to his eldest son, also called John Marsden (1704-1742).

**John Marsden (1704-1742)** was born at the farm but by the time he came of age or married he was living elsewhere, although nearby. His Will refers to him as *John Marsden of Ossett Lights* which suggests he lived part of his short life somewhere to the east of Sowood Farm. The 1790 Wakefield Manor Estate map shows a building closer to Horbury but still within Ossett parish. In 1731 John married his cousin *Elizabeth Illingworth* (the daughter of his aunt Elizabetha Marsden and John Illingworth – the gene pool was narrowing) By the time of his death in 1742, aged 38, he left a widow and four children, all boys, under the age of 11. Unsurprisingly, his young widow re-married in 1747.

His Will left a life interest in Sowood farm to his mother, who was living there in accordance with his father's wishes. On her death the farm was to pass to his widow and on her death to his eldest son, Francis Marsden (1731-1765). Other land on Storrs Hill was left to his younger sons William, John and Thomas.

**Francis Marsden (1731-1765)** suffered a similar fate to his father and died young at the age of 34. He and his wife Hannah (nee Haigh and the daughter of Robert Haigh of Hags Farm Ossett) had five children but two pre-deceased Francis leaving his widow Hannah with three children under the age of 8 at his death in 1742. By this time the significant landholdings established by his father, grandfather and great grandfather had been largely distributed to Francis's siblings and uncles and he was left with Sowood Farm which he left to his eldest son also called Francis (1762-1792). His wife Hannah however had inherited land from her father, Robert Haigh of Hags who was a wealthy man and son of the long serving Minister of Horbury Church, James Haigh and his wife Barbara (nee Leeke) who was also had extremely wealthy and influential origins. Francis had left in his Will a wish that his children be brought up at his home at Sowood and true to his wishes his widow Hannah remained at

---

<sup>8</sup> 1709 Wakefield Manor Book

<sup>9</sup> *Messuage* – Plot of land usually containing a dwelling

the farm until they were of age. In 1784 the 49 year old Widow Marsden married *William Illingworth* who was her late husband's first cousin.

**Francis Marsden (1762-1792)** was the eldest son of the earlier Francis, but he was only three years of age when his father died. He was to inherit Sowood Farm, to which his mother had tenant rights for as long as she remained a widow, when he reached the age of majority in about 1784 – the year his mother re-married. In 1775 *Widow [Hannah] Marsden* is recorded as the owner of the Farm. Francis married in 1790 and his Will made provision that if his wife was with child then that child should inherit Sowood. It was not to be and consequently when Francis died in 1792, aged 29, Sowood was left to his only brother John Marsden, aged 27. Francis left other land to his sister Elizabeth

**John Marsden (1764-1797)** was farming land at Southowram (left to him by his uncle William Marsden of Hallcliffe) at the time of his brother's death and he returned home to Sowood to farm his inheritance. He was a bachelor and he too died young in 1797 aged only 33. He was the last of the male line of this branch of Marsdens and he left his Ossett copyhold and freehold estates to his sister Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) for life with the proviso that on her death the estates were to be divided equally between her children. This was to be the beginning of the end for the family's ownership of Sowood Farm which now passed, by marriage, to the Nettleton family.

#### **1798-1903 The Nettletons and John Scholefield Horbury Attorney – Troubled times and legal complications**

**Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden 1757-1843)** inherited a life interest in Sowood Farm on the death of her brother John Marsden in 1797. It is probable that it was at this time that she and her husband, John Nettleton, who she had married in 1783, moved into Sowood. At her death the Farm, and other land devised to her by John Marsden, was to pass to those of Elizabeth's children who were alive at her death. Elizabeth and John Nettleton had eight children (one died aged 6 months in 1791) and it was almost inevitable that the farm would have to be sold to fulfil John Marsden's wishes.

In the 1821 Ossett Census John and Elizabeth Nettleton are recorded at Sowood suggesting John (aged 77) was still working the farm. Because the common law of the time meant that a wife's rights and ownership of assets passed to the husband, most property records in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century show John Nettleton *of Storrs Hill*, farmer, as owner and/or occupier of Sowood Farm. Even after his death in 1823 the Farm is recorded in property records as being in the hands of his Trustees/Exors (his son Joseph and his son in law *Joseph Brook*). In 1816, one of their children, Thomas, died leaving six children to share John Marsden's Ossett estates on Elizabeth's death.

John Nettleton of Storrs Hill died in 1823 making no reference to Sowood Farm in his Will. This was to be expected since he had no power over the distribution of the Farm under the terms of John Marsden's bequest. Prior to his death however he and his children had made agreements with John Scholefield, a Horbury Attorney at Law, businessman and landowner. The detail is sketchy but it seems that the Nettleton children's promised inheritance of Sowood, to which they would become entitled on their mother's death, had been "bought" by John Scholefield. It seems likely that in 1823 Scholefield advanced the Nettleton children an amount equal to the value of Sowood Farm which allowed them to "cash" their promised inheritance earlier than the death of their mother. John Scholefield, effectively a mortgagee, secured these advances against Sowood

Elizabeth Nettleton lived for another 20 years and died at Sowood Farm in 1843. By this time she had survived all but three of her eight children. The views of the surviving three children are unknown but the implications of their earlier decision to enter the 1823 agreement must have been clear. In 1823 it seems they had each mortgaged their *one sixth* share of Sowood Farm; had they awaited their

mother's death then the survivors would have had one third shares each because three of their siblings died between 1823 and 1843. Of course they could not have anticipated that their mother would live so long or that three of their siblings would die before she did. However their actions in 1823 had lost each of them one half of the value of their inheritance.

John Nettleton died in 1823 but his estate had not been settled by 1843 and there is evidence that the issue was still "live" in 1881 and maybe even in 1903. In between, in 1836, there had been a Chancery Court action by William Barber who had entered a land transaction with John Nettleton in 1815. All of John Nettleton's children, those individuals who witnessed his 1822 Will and 1823 Codicil (which made changes to his Will to reflect the John Nettleton junior episode) his executors and also John Scholefield were named as defendants in the action. Those individuals who were not family were questioned as to the signatures on the Will and Codicil, the length of time they had known John senior and the state of his mind in 1823 when he died.

No evidence has emerged of the outcome of the 1836 Chancery case and it may be that it never came to Court but this and the 1823 Agreement may have caused the long delay in the closure of John Nettleton's estate. It is possible that this affair which appears to have rumbled on for 80 years since the 1823 Agreements with John Scholefield will forever remain a mystery but it can be no coincidence that in **1904** his grand daughter by marriage, Frances Battye, passed ownership of Sowood Farm to her son Captain Lionel Richard James *Scholefield* Battye – the great grandson of John Scholefield.

John Nettleton senior was buried on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1823 and the following notice appeared in the Leeds Mercury on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1823.

**SOWOOD-HOUSE, OSSETT.**

**T**O BE LET, with immediate Possession, either from Year to Year, or for a Term of Years, all that HOMESTEAD, situate at Stors Hill, in Ossett aforesaid, late in the possession of Mr. John Nettleton, deceased; consisting of a good DWELLING-HOUSE, with Four Rooms on the Ground Floor, Pantry, Cellars, &c. Two Barns, Two Granaries, One Shop, with Chamber Nine Yards by Seven Yards, Stabling for Six Horses, Cow Houses, Pig Styes, Coal-house, and other necessary Outbuildings; and Twenty-three Acres of rich Arable, Meadow and Pasture LAND, lying contiguous thereto.

N.B. The above place is well watered, and pleasantly situated, being Three Miles from Wakefield, and Three Miles from Dewsbury, and adjoining the Road leading from Ossett to Horbury, and well worth the attention of any Person wanting much Room.

Application to be made to Joseph Nettleton, Butcher, Ossett, or to Mrs. Nettleton, on the Premises.

In 1841 John Nettleton's widow Elizabeth continued to live at the Farm with the Census recording her living either in the house or in a cottage there with a 'servant', Sarah Nettleton who was probably Elizabeth's grand daughter. There was however also a tenant farmer, John Hill, working the farm in **1841** and this arrangement involving tenant farmers continued for more than 100 years until 1948. In **1843** –the year of Elizabeth's death - the Ossett Tithes Award records the farm still in the ownership of John Nettleton's Executors ie his son Joseph Nettleton and his son in law *Joseph Brook*<sup>10</sup> who had married John Nettleton's eldest daughter Elizabeth Nettleton in 1815.

Whether or not the Nettletons legally owned the farm between 1823 and 1903 is uncertain but most property records suggest that various Nettleton Executors did have a hold of some sort. In 1876 Frances Battye (John Scholefield's grand daughter by marriage) declared a right of inheritance of 144 acres of West Riding real estate – including Sowood Farm.

It was certainly the case in 1841 that Elizabeth Nettleton was living at Sowood Farm but so too was farmer John Hill suggesting that there may have been at least two dwellings<sup>11</sup> located on the Farm at that time. A deed of **1847**<sup>12</sup> indicates '*all those messuages etc with the barn stables folds shops some of which have for some time past been converted into and are now occupied as cottages at Storrs Hill..now in the occupation of John Marsden, Job Scott, David Westerman and others....*' It is clear from other references in the Deed that this is Sowood Farm. It records that, in addition to the Farmhouse, at least three cottages, some perhaps converted from farm buildings, stood here from some time earlier than 1847. It is possible that some of these dwellings or conversions were undertaken in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by the ageing John Nettleton who needed to secure a steady income which required less effort than farming.

Between 1851 and 1891 the Farm was tenanted by working farmers. John Hill, who was tenant farmer in 1841 was still at Sowood in **1851** but by **1861** he was replaced by George Mitchell, Rag Merchant and farmer of 30 acres, and his wife Sarah (nee Marsden)<sup>13</sup> who built a house later in the 1860's (Rock Cottage - demolished in the late 1950's/early 1960's) on the south side of Sowood Bend opposite Sowood Farm.

In **1871** and **1881** the tenant farmer was William Crowther also working 30 acres and, the Nettletons, in the form of *J. Nettleton's Trustees*, were recorded in the 1881 Poor Law Assessment record as the owners of Sowood Farm and William Crowther & his under tenants were the occupiers. That record shows the Sowood land and *the house, kitchen, barn, stable/mistal, old cottage used as mistal, hen place, cart shed*. In addition there are five cottages also said to be owned by the Nettleton Trustees and occupied by named tenants or, perhaps, under tenants. In 1871 there are 35 people in six families living in dwellings, probably including converted agricultural buildings, at Sowood Farm. By this time Sowood Farm was a busy community.

It is difficult to reconcile<sup>14</sup> the 1881 Poor Law Assessment reference to ownership by the Nettletons with an 1876 indenture between Frances Battye, [of 66 Queens Gardens Hyde Park London] and the Duke of Leeds, Lord of the Manor of Wakefield which confirms that Frances Battye (nee Bibby) has inherited 144 acres of copyhold estate in Yorkshire including 16 acres at Sowood Farm. It seems that the ownership was still in dispute and as we have seen this conflict must hark back to the 1815 and 1820's Agreements and the 1836 Chancery case. .

---

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Brook married Elizabeth Nettleton in 1815. She was the eldest daughter of John Nettleton and his wife Elizabeth (nee Marsden). By marriage the Brook family became related to the Marsdens, the builders of Sowood Farm.

<sup>11</sup> There is also evidence however that the farmhouse was divided to provide accommodation for two families

<sup>12</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Service Deeds Registry. Deed reference 1847 QE 333 340

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Marsden was the 4 x great grand daughter of Francis Marsden (1651-1718)

<sup>14</sup> It may be that the Scholefield Agreements allowed time for the Nettleton children to redeem the mortgages and that this period had not yet elapsed and/or the litigation of the early 1800's remained unresolved. There is no doubt however that the Battye descendants of John Scholefield owned the Farm, or the rights to the Farm and this was borne out in 1904.

The description in the 1876 Deed refers to '*two cottages & gardens Sowood House & Farm buildings, 3 cottages adjoining, Great Ox Close, Little Ox Close, The Ing, Calf Croft....*' All of the above buildings & dwellings are occupied by William Crowther & his undertenants. These are the field names recorded on the 1843 Tithe Award and those same field names are referred to in John Marsden's Will in 1735. Ox Close and the Ing are mentioned in the 1676 Wakefield Court Roll when Francis Marsden first acquired the copyhold interest in Sowood farm.

But how was it that Frances Battye (nee Bibby) daughter of James Jenkinson Bibby of Hardwicke Grange Shropshire, High Sheriff of Shropshire and founder of the Bibby Shipping Line came to be owner of 15 acres of land and a farm at Sowood in Ossett? In 1866 Frances Bibby married Richard Battye JP and Attorney at Law of Skelton Hall and Crosland Grange Yorkshire. Richard was the son of William Walker Battye and Margaret Scholefield who was the daughter of John Scholefield of Horbury. Richard Battye was grandson to John Scholefield.

John Scholefield died in 1850 leaving the bulk of his estate including Sowood Farm, to his daughter Margaret and her heirs. She died at Skelton Hall York in August 1869 surviving, by only five months, her husband William Walker Battye who died in March 1869.

Their estates were left in large part to her eldest son Richard Battye, Barrister at Law, of Queens Gardens London, the husband of Frances Battye. He died at Hardwicke Grange, the home of his in laws, "the result of an accident" in 1873 and Frances inherited his estate, including Sowood Farm, upon his death. Thus Frances Battye (nee Bibby) heiress to part of her father's estate (valued at £1.773m at his death in 1893) was also to inherit a substantial part of John Scholefield's estate as a result of the deaths of her in laws and her husband within a four year period 1869-1873. She thus became the owner of large tracts of land and property including land at Horbury and Sowood Farm.

By the time of his death in 1850 John Scholefield was the second largest owner of land in Horbury (the largest owner being John Carr). In 1873 the Return of Owners of Land in Yorkshire record the late Richard Battye and his late father William Walker Battye as owners of 331 acres of Yorkshire land - including Sowood By 1900 Frances Battye was one of the largest owners of land in Horbury and her ownerships included Hallcroft, Horbury Hall and Nether Hall later to be The Shepherd's Arms Public House.

Frances Battye continued to rent Sowood to tenant farmers and by 1891 John Tasker was farming Sowood In 1896 **Fredrick Brook (1864-1936)**, the grandson of Joseph Brook and his wife Elizabeth (nee Nettleton), had become the tenant farmer of Sowood Farm.. His grandfather, Joseph Brook, was a Trustee of John Nettleton's estate in 1823 and his wife was John Nettleton's daughter. Joseph would have known Sowood farm which may have been the reason for him leaving his farming at Gawthorpe in the 1820's to assist his aged father in law to farm at Sowood. Sowood Farm was no stranger to the Brooks and Fredrick's tenancy was to begin a long occupation by the Brook family which lasts until today (2013).

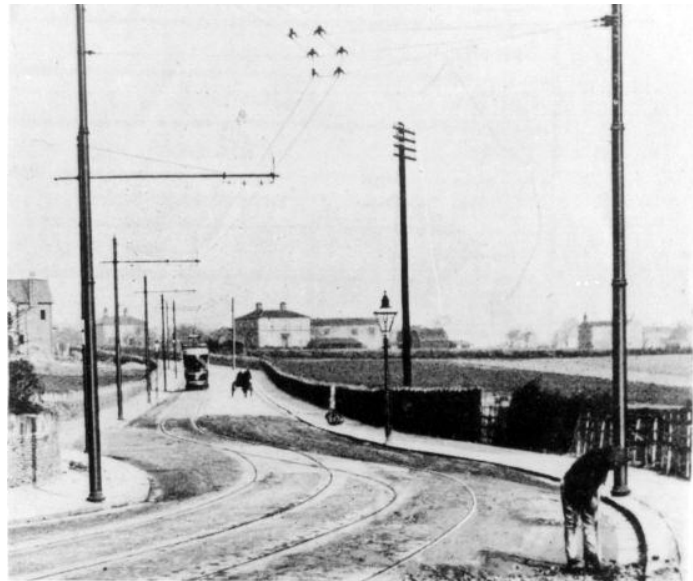
In **1904** shortly after Fredrick's arrival there was to be a change of ownership at Sowood Farm. During their short marriage Richard Battye and his wife Frances (nee Bibby) of Skelton Hall and Crosland Manor Yorkshire had children, the eldest was the only son born in 1867 and named Lionel Richard James Scholefield Battye . He was educated at Eton and became a Captain in the 13<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars. In May 1904<sup>15</sup> Captain Battye of Cadogan Square Kensington was party to a Deed with his mother Francis whereby he acquired several of her land and property holdings in Horbury and Ossett.

---

<sup>15</sup> In 1903 the estate of John Nettleton (died 1867) and his sister Harriet (died 1865) was proved. John was the grandson of John Nettleton (died 1823). Was it coincidence that a year later the Farm passed by Deed from Frances Battye to her son? Perhaps there was some form of covenant on the land which expired after 80 years.

Included in the transfer was ‘...house, barn, mistal, two cottages and 16 acres of land in the occupation of Fredrick Brook’

In the early 1900's the Wakefield & District Light Railway Company(WDLRC) had begun land acquisitions and work to develop a tram, or light rail, link from Ossett to Wakefield Agbrigg via Horbury. The line, which required the acquisition of a strip of frontage land to be purchased<sup>16</sup> from Frances Battye to widen the road at Sowood, opened in August 1905 and closed in July 1932. Until July 2009 the three line Tramshed depot stood opposite Sowood Farm but today the only legacy of tram journeys past Sowood Farm is the collapsed wall, built by the WDLRC in 1904, at the roadside south frontage of the Farmhouse. The road level at Sowood is much higher than the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century buildings which it skirts, partly as a result of the foundations for the laying of the tram tracks in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The above photograph from about 1910 shows a workman on the roadside outside Sowood Farm with an Ossett-Horbury-Agbrigg Tramcar in the distance.. It appears also that a horse and cart, or trap, is making its way towards the Farm.



### 1904-2012 Captain Battye and the Brook family

The Brook and Battye families were to continue their owner/occupier relationship well into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In **1910** the Inland Revenue [*Domesday*] Valuation shows LRJS Battye as owner and Fred Brook as tenant. The record shows *Milk Farm known as Sowood Farm....there is a good building frontage on two sides – Trams pass to and from Wakefield frequently*. Fred Brook is also shown as owner and occupier of a “wood mistal” at the Farm. He is there too in **1911** when the Census records Fredrick Brook, Cattle Dealer and Farmer living in the six roomed Sowood Farm.

Fredrick Brook died on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1936 and the Farm tenancy was taken over by his only son **Bennett Brook (1891-1980)**. Bennett's Farm Account Book from this time has survived and the first entry is dated 4<sup>th</sup> March 1936. It was during Bennett's tenure that the Farm was purchased by the Brook family. Captain Battye died, a bachelor without issue, in May 1947 and his executors began to sell his land holdings, including Sowood Farm. On 1<sup>st</sup> October **1948** Bennett purchased *...all that farmhouse cottage (formerly two cottages but some time ago converted into one) & farm buildings together with land thereto belonging known as Sowood Farm situated on Sowood Road formerly in the occupation of Fredrick Brook but now of the purchaser the land being formerly described as 16 acres but the whole by recent admeasurement having been found to contain 15 acres 1 rood 35 perches....”*

<sup>16</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Service Deeds Registry Deed reference 30 942 427

Except for a break in 1917-18 whilst Bennett was serving with the Army on the Western Front as a Machine Gunner<sup>17</sup>, he had worked the farm from being a young man, assisting his father on the land and with the stock. Bennett's widowed mother, Lilly continued to live at Sowood Farm after her husband, Fred's death in 1936 but whilst Bennett took over the running of the Farm he lived with his family on the other side of Sowood Bend at the 1860's built Rock Cottage which he rented. Lilly Brook died at Sowood Farm on 29 September 1957 and shortly afterwards Bennett Brook moved to Manor House<sup>18</sup> on Manor Lane. In the meantime, Bennett's only son, **David Brook (1928-2002)** had married Dorothy Ingham in 1951 and they began their married life at Barmby Fold before moving to Sowood Farm in 1957 following Lilly Brook's death. Their two children Christine and Peter were born in the mid/late 1950's.

In the 1980's David and Dorothy and Brook began to contemplate improvements to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century working Farmhouse at Sowood and in 1981 they were visited by the National Commission of Historic Monuments. This led, in 1988, to the Farmhouse being Grade II Listed and it remains today the only Listed Building in Ossett, which is still used as a dwelling. But even the 1988 listing documentation left unanswered questions about the identity of the builder of the Farmhouse and the building itself. That documentation includes reference to the lintel/datestone above the south facing front door of the Farmhouse which bear the initials 'FM' and the date '1689' Between these two markings there is barely legible lettering which the listing has variously reported as being the word 'flackender' and 'F Mackender'. The listing attributes the building of the 1689 Farmhouse to a person of the same name, stating...*The present house built in 1689 by F Mackender incorporates a timber partition between the body of the house and the outshut...*

Had the listing sources called upon the Horbury local historian, Ken Bartlett, he would have told them about '*The Marsden family.....from Ossett, mainly from Sowood Farm, just over the Ossett Horbury boundary. The lintel over the front doorway has the initials of the Marsden family and a late seventeenth Century date*' Ken Bartlett, of course, was correct and this research has taken his work a step or two further and identified the builder as Francis Marsden. As for the barely legible lettering on the lintel above the doorway it reads neither flackender nor Mackender but **Marsden**.



The listing also states, categorically, that '*work has revealed substantial rafters which probably came from the buildings of the Medieval manorial centre which is known to have existed on the site from at least 1302*'

---

<sup>17</sup> Bennett's War Diary 1918 has survived & an extract is in the full History of Sowood Farm

<sup>18</sup> Manor House Manor Lane Ossett Mark Wilby (1827-1912) [Alan Howe 2009]

Whilst it **may** be the case that a *manorial centre* existed at Sowood Farm it is by no means certain. The argument in favour of Sowood Farm being the site of an earlier manor is based upon 14<sup>th</sup> century Court Rolls which refer to farming activity at Sowood but this is not evidence that this activity took place at the site of the modern day Sowood Farm. Whilst this *may* be the case, other evidence suggests that the Manor may have been situated elsewhere in Sowood.

This evidence<sup>19</sup> suggests Sowood manor *may* have been situated further west, possibly with a manor house, on Storrs Hill Road near *Sowood Green*. A dwelling known in 1850 as the “Manor House” built in 1684 and demolished in 1958/59 stood on a lane leading westward from Storrs Hill Road - the lane now leads to Ossett Academy. The “Manor House” was built on land which was owned by Edward Oates in 1775 and his father, William Oates, was recorded in 1709 as the *Lord of the Manor of South wood green*. The Oates ownership in this location stretched to 121 acres and in 1349 the Manor was described as a messuage and *carucate* of land which is generally taken to be about 120 acres.

Previously unknown evidence has now been discovered that, in 1676, the present day Sowood Farm was the site of a dwelling – probably a farm - called *Sowood House*. This substantiates the contention that an earlier building stood here before the present farmhouse was built or rebuilt in 1689. This earlier building may also have had a long history and may have included an earlier Manor House. Whilst it is not claimed that the Storrs Hill Road *Manor House* and the associated Oates 120 acres landholding was the site of Sowood Manor and House its credentials are at least as worthy of further research and consideration as the Sowood Farm site.

In **2012** Sowood Farm is owned and run by **Dorothy Brook** and her children **Peter Brook** and **Christine Burnell** (nee Brook). Since 1689 the Farm has been owned by the Marsden family who built it, the Nettletons who married into the Marsden family, the Scholefields and the Battyés who acquired it by default and the Brooks who tenanted and subsequently purchased it. As it turns out, they brought it back to the family who built it.

Many interesting facts have emerged during the course of the research but two family connections are particularly fascinating.

In 1593 Joanye Brouke died of the plague and was buried at Denton's House – Sowood Farm. The present Brook family are almost certainly 9<sup>th</sup> generation descendants of Joanye Brouke's family.

Moreover the study has revealed a relationship between today's owners and the 1689 builder which was unknown to the current owners of the Farm, the Brook family. The Farm was built in 1689 by Francis Marsden and one of his descendants married a Nettleton who had a daughter who married a Brook. These happy events led to Peter Brook and his sister Christine being related to Francis. In 2012 Peter and Christine are working the Farm which 324 years ago was built and worked by their 8x Great Grandfather Francis Marsden.

---

<sup>19</sup> See *The History of Sowood Manor* [Alan Howe 2013]





### **Sowood Farm Timeline 1277-2013**

**1277** Wakefield Court Roll [WCR] reference to *Soutwode*

**1302** Sowood probably purchased by Earl de Warenne from Sir John de Horbury & leased back to Sir John for his life

**1304** Sir John de Horbury dies and Manor reverts back to Earl de Warenne

**1309** Wakefield Court Roll reference to *Southwode* manor

**1315** Henry Sprigonel appointed forester of Sowood. Adam son of William Shilnyng fined 50s (£1000 current value) for malpractice at Sowood & three former graves of Horbury fined for not repairing the manor house at Sowood

**1316** Henry de Flockton, lord's shepherd at Sowood fined for trespass

**1323** Sowood leased for seven years to Thomas Alayn

**1327** Feoffment reference to Henry, Thomas Del Hill & John Alayn of Southwod

**1336** Manor sold to William de Scargill and his wife Joan

**1349** Warin de Scargill, son of William, died of Plague -manor is a messuage & carucate in hands of tenants at will

**1363** Sold to William de Gargrave and his wife Christian

**1585** Christopher Denton fined for not maintaining his *gate* on Sowood Lone[Lane]

**1593** Plague at Sowood. Eight Dentons & five others buried at *Denton's house*

**1657** *Edmund Lord* of Sowood buries his son William at Horbury. In 1654, 1655 & 1661 he also buried still born children but these records do not refer to him as being *of Sowood*

**1672** Hearth Tax shows Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh each paying tax on one chimney

**1676** Francis Marsden acquires copyhold interest in Sowood from Thomas & Priscilla Purdue (nee Rayner). Farm tenants *Edmund Lord* & Edward Haigh

**1680** The Marsden (Francis and brother Richard) family arrive in Sowood/Storrs Hill

**1689** Francis Marsden (re)builds Sowood Farm and has three children baptised Dewsbury

**1709** Francis Marsden (1651-1718) recorded as owner of messuage and lands at Sowood.

**1718** Farm inherited by eldest son John Marsden (1674-1735)

**1735** Farm inherited by eldest son John Marsden (1704-1742).Farmhouse Inventory

**1742** Farm inherited by eldest son Francis Marsden (1731-1765)

**1765** Farm inherited by eldest son Francis Marsden (1762-1792) Farmhouse Inventory

**1775** Widow Marsden in occupation of the Farm

**1792** Farm inherited by John Marsden brother of Francis Marsden (1765-1792)

**1797** Farm Inherited by Elizabeth Nettleton ( Marsden) sister of John Marsden (1764-1797)

**1798** John Nettleton owner (as Elizabeth's husband)

**1813** Inclosure Order shows John Nettleton owner (as Elizabeth's husband)

**1814** John Nettleton junior signs Agreement with John Scholefield, Horbury Attorney

**1823** John Nettleton Executors' recorded as owners. Agreements with John Scholefield signed by all surviving Nettleton children of John & Elizabeth

**1843** Ossett Tithe Award John Nettleton Execs (but mortgaged to John Scholefield)

**1876** Frances Battye, wife of John Scholefield's grandson, registers rights to ownership

**1881** Poor Law Rate records J. Nettleton's Executors as owners.

**1888** Probate granted re John Nettleton's son (also John) who died December 1867

**1896** Fredrick Brook becomes tenant of Sowood Farm

**1903** Probate granted re John Nettleton's grandson (also John) who died April 1866

**1904** Captain Lionel Richard James *Scholefield* Battye, son of Frances, becomes owner.

**1936** Bennett Brook takes over tenancy on death of his father, Fredrick (whose widow, Lilly continues to live at Sowood)

**1948** Bennett Brook, son of Fredrick purchases the Farm but lives nearby

**1957** Bennett's son David Brook and his wife Dorothy (nee Ingham) move to Sowood after death of David's grandmother, Lilly

**1980** David inherits Sowood Farm on the death of his father, Bennett Brook

**1988** Sowood Farmhouse is Grade II Listed

**2002** Dorothy Brook and her children Peter Brook and Christine Burnell (nee Brook) take over running of the farm



## Sowood Farm – 1300-1600 Famine, Pestilence & War

Previous references have detailed the owners and occupiers of the Farm at Sowood from the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century to the Marsden's arrival in about 1680. Perhaps not surprisingly there have been some gaps in the history but whoever was farming here in those days faced some hard times. This chapter takes a look at the events which would shape the lives of those living and working in 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century England.

There were significant changes at Sowood in the 1300's with a change in ownership and with new staff coming and going perhaps as a consequence. There was no doubt an imperative to get the working of the farm on a level keel recognising its importance to the local community but more particularly its importance to the Lord of the Manor's table.

For the workers themselves however the imperative was different and the workers at a local level at Sowood were more concerned about feeding *their* families. When it comes to feeding your own and times are desperate then *those that have* are in a much stronger and more influential position than *those who have not*. Access to a local farm was an advantage; an opportunity to look after those closest to you.

At the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, between about 1304 and 1323, Sowood Farm was *demesne* ie run by the lord of the manor for his own use. In reference to demesne lands in Wakefield, Walker<sup>20</sup> writes;

*The demesne land of the lord, his ploughland, meadow and pasture was intermingled with the lands held by his villeins (the men who were unfree and in complete subjection to the lord, always presumed to be descendants of the conquered Saxons), and the free men settled on the land (the tenant farmers holding under the lord). It was largely by the help of his villeins that the lord's demesne or home farm was worked. The plough teams of the lord and those of his villeins worked side by side on the demesne land. Three days ploughing was required of each villain, provided he possessed a plough and a team of oxen; his day's work was valued at 2d, and he had one meal costing 1d. The villain had to bring his own team of oxen with his heavy oak plough, and he was required to help in sowing the grain, to reap it with his sickle, to thrash it with his flail, and to cart it to his lord's barn.....*

*Heavy as these were they were not the innovation of the Norman lord but were the continuation of services rendered in much earlier days. In return for this the lord granted his villeins protection against neighbouring lords, and he also granted a toft or homestead which entitled him to rights of common in the parish, and also a croft of not less than one acre for cultivation and pasture*

*The land of the township was divided into the common fields, three in number, in which every villain had his share. The arable land of the township was cultivated under a three years' rotation of crop. Each field was divided into smaller portions called selions. The average breadth of each selion was 33 feet and the length 220 yards, or a furlong, averaging about half an acre. These selions or strips were divided from each other by balks of green unploughed turf, three to eight feet in breadth, which formed roadways for men and carts between the separate selions, and also divided each man's ploughland from that next to it on either side. Each villein's holding did not lie in adjoining strips but was formed of strips intermingled with other men's holdings. This arrangement was in all probability originally settled by lot and the holdings were changed by rotation or by lot every year. The normal holding was a virgate or yardland, as much as a man could plough by two oxen – about thirty acres. While under cultivation the ploughland was enclosed with hurdles, as there were no hedges in medieval England. Apart from the ploughland lay the meadow, known as the **Ings**, and this was common hayfield as well as common pasture and was kept clear of cattle from Lady day (March 25<sup>th</sup>)*

<sup>20</sup> Wakefield Its History and People by JW Walker

*to Lammas day (August 1<sup>st</sup>), so that the grass could grow and the hay be cut and gathered.....From Lammas day throughout the winter the meadow was common pasture, into which the lord and the townsmen turned their cattle, as well as into the fallow field and into the stubble when the corn was safely gathered in so that the grass on the balks might be eaten off. None had the right to fence in any portion for his own exclusive benefit*

*This distribution of the arable land into selions led to great inconvenience as it must have been difficult for a villain to manage his own strips widely dispersed over the great field, thus disputes among neighbours must have been frequent As it was rare for a villain to possess more than two oxen, and quite usual for the border or cottager to have none, co-operation was necessary for the manorial tenants to carry out their agricultural operations. Each man's cattle had to be branded and the lord's branding irons were kept at Sandal Castle.*

[References are made in the above to the use of oxen and the name lngs. The fields adjacent to Sowood Farmhouse, and still part of the holding today, were known as *Ox Close* and *The lng* or *Round lng* in 1676, 1775 and 1843]

The conditions for farming in the early 1300's were often desperate and perhaps this was one of the reasons for the changes and for prosecutions and fines of the earlier 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The Great Famine of 1315-1317, as it was later called, struck the whole of Europe and was the worst of several such famines to strike in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It began with poor weather conditions in spring 1315 and continued for more than two years with devastating effect. Not surprisingly, because the harvests had been largely decimated, there was little to eat and starvation on a massive scale with life expectancy dropping to an even lower level than its norm. Between 1301 and 1325 people were fortunate to reach the age of thirty.

Records now show that between about AD 950-1250 there had been a notably warm climate but this was followed by a decline in temperatures culminating between 1500-1700. Between 1310 and 1330, in particular, northern Europe, including Great Britain, encountered the worst and most sustained periods of bad weather in the Middle Ages with long severe winters and significant rainfall and cold temperatures in summer. Not surprisingly wheat yields, which had been in decline since 1280, fell further and food prices began to increase often beyond the price which could be afforded by the poor. Assuming there was food at all.

These were desperate times as people tried to eke out a living as best they could. At Sowood Farm Henry Sprigonell was appointed forester perhaps in an attempt to clear more land to work to provide more food from poor yields. Quantity rather than quality was the best to hope for. There was mischief here too though with very heavy fines imposed in 1316 on Henry de Flockton, the lord of the Manor's shepherd, for trespass and in 1315 for others including Adam Shylning.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1315 Shylning was questioned about threshing he had done in the *barn at Sowood* in the previous year when he was grave<sup>21</sup> at Horbury. He appears to have been abusing his position by using farm facilities for his own use and without consent. His claim was that he was simply carrying out instructions from the auditor and receiver. He was also charged with various faults in his administration of the manor of Sowood including a failure to sow corn, hay which had not been gathered or sold and for threshing the lord of the manor's spring wheat and oats. In December 1316 he was fined the substantial amount of 50 shillings. In today's values this was about £1000.

In isolation this fine, and that on Henry de Flockton in 1316 when he was fined 46s 8d, seem quite remarkable but set against a background of famine and unrest it was clear that the lord of the manor was determined to stamp out the abuse and maladministration at the Farm. This was a time too when

---

<sup>21</sup> *Grave* or *reeve* – a Court official elected annually to carry out work for the Lord of the Manor

the farm was *demesne* ie managed and operated for the lord's own use. He would have been less used to the poor conditions than those who served him.

Things went from bad to worse in spring 1315 with very heavy rain and cool temperatures. There were crop failures and straw and hay was late being brought in or not harvested at all with consequential effects on livestock fodder. The price of food in England doubled between spring and midsummer and even if livestock was slaughtered it was difficult to preserve because salt could not be evaporated in the cold and wet conditions.

In their search for anything to sustain themselves and their families people turned to foraging for anything edible and harvested wild edible roots, plants, grasses, nuts and bark from Henry de Sprigonel's forests at Sowood. As usual those who had least suffered most.

By summer 1317 the weather and harvests improved somewhat but those who survived, and many did, were much weakened by the Great Famine's effects and pneumonia, bronchitis and tuberculosis were prevalent in the following years. It was to be 1325 before the food supplies returned to relatively normal levels. The period of the famine and its after effects are believed to have led to the premature deaths of 10%-25% of the population. At its worst assessment 1 in 4 people died as a result of this period of climate change and its effects.

This would be as of nothing in comparison with the next disaster to afflict the populace as The Black Death or the The Great Plague arrived in Great Britain in 1349. In Sowood, Warin de Scargill, son of the then owner of Sowood, William de Scargill and his wife Joan, died of the Plague in 1349. Whilst the wealthy may have been able to avoid some of the worst effects of the famine some 30 years earlier it was more difficult to avoid contracting this disease. The Black Death was to kill 1.5 million people out of an estimated total of 4 million people between **1348** and **1350**.

Boccaccio's<sup>22</sup> description of the plague is graphic;

"In men and women alike it first betrayed itself by the emergence of certain tumours in the groin or armpits, some of which grew as large as a common apple, others as an egg...From the two said parts of the body this deadly gavocciolo soon began to propagate and spread itself in all directions indifferently; after which the form of the malady began to change, black spots or livid making their appearance in many cases on the arm or the thigh or elsewhere, now few and large, now minute and numerous. As the gavocciolo had been and still was an infallible token of approaching death, such also were these spots on whomsoever they showed themselves."

Bubonic plague, caused by flea bites, was the most common form. The infected would suffer from fever, headaches, nausea, and vomiting. Swelling called *buboes* and dark rashes appeared on the groin, legs, armpits, and neck. The pneumonic plague, which affected the lungs, spread through the air by coughs and sneezes. The most severe form of the plague was the septicemic plague. The bacteria entered the bloodstream and killed every person affected within hours. All three forms of the plague were very contagious and spread quickly – including to domestic animals and livestock. Proper treatment was unknown, so most people died within a week after infection with the Black Death.

The plague carried by rat fleas thrived in poor and insanitary conditions. In those days, as in 1593 when the plague came again to Sowood, the Farm would have provided ideal conditions for the disease to become established. Warmth from animals, numerous and easily accessible buildings and foodstuffs and nooks and crannies a plenty for rodents to hide.

---

<sup>22</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio – [1313-1375] Italian author and poet

The Black Death had a major impact on the local population and was to bring the same problems, albeit with different causes, as those faced in 1315-1317. Fields went unploughed as the men became victims of the plague. Harvests would be lost for the same reasons and animals would die or be neglected. Whole villages would once again face starvation. Often the lords who lost their manpower turned to sheep farming which was less labour intensive. Grain farming became less popular which led to bread shortages and increases in the price of food. Once again the poor fared worse than the well to do.

*Nearly one-half of the population succumbed, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that when the Black Death quitted a district it did so because there was little left for it to prey upon. Fields went out of cultivation, sheep and oxen swarmed among the uncut corn, mill-sails stood still, church bells were silent, and the fruit hung disregarded upon the trees.<sup>23</sup>*

There was of course nothing “good” about the plague but the outbreaks, however significant, were usually shortlived and rarely continued beyond the autumn and into cold winter conditions. By 1350 the worst of it was over.

The decimation of the workforce led to chronic labour shortages which meant improved bargaining power for local workforces which legislation, in 1350, sought to limit by providing that work offered to unemployed people must be accepted and at rates prevailing in 1346; refusal to pay was punished by imprisonment.

The financial demands of the Hundred Years' War also led to the levy of three poll taxes in four years. The third, that of 1380, demanded a flat rate of 12d per adult (the poll tax of 1379 had demanded 4d, with a higher amount payable by the wealthier) and was levied in April 1381 and this led to the Peasants' Revolt

Evidence of unrest at Sowood or Ossett has not emerged but conflicts over wages appear elsewhere in local manors. In 1381, in nearby Conisbrough, Court Roll<sup>24</sup> entries refer to unpaid wages for ploughing, mowing, harvest service and work at the mill. Some of these unpaid wages were owed by the grave of Conisbrough, William Lumbard, and these wages may have been claimed for work on the manor or for work on William's own holding. Wealthier tenants could hire poorer or landless inhabitants of the manor to work on their own holdings or to perform labour services they themselves owed.

It appears that wages paid by the lord of the manor for work outside the customary service works were: 2d/day for light work; 3d/day for heavy work; 4d/day for skilled work (carpentry). These rates help to put into perspective the fines imposed on offenders and the fees for settling cases in the manor court. An apparently small fine of 2d could easily amount to a day's wages and the fine of 50s imposed in Sowood on Adam Shylning, a skilled man one assumes, almost 70 years earlier was equivalent to almost 6 months pay.

If you were unfortunate to be born 700 years ago in 1312 you had only a 25% chance of reaching the age of forty. If the famine didn't take you and if you somehow managed to avoid the plague you were one of the lucky few.

By comparison the 15<sup>th</sup> Century was uneventful – apart that is for a little disagreement between the houses of York and Lancaster – The War of The Roses and the Battle of Wakefield in 1460. The conflict was so close and on occasion so intense that it is scarcely possible that the people of Sowood and Sowood Farm were not affected by it.

---

<sup>23</sup> Wakefield and its People [Walker] page 95

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*



The Duke of York, representing the Yorkists, had been appointed Protector of the realm during King Henry VI's 'period of idiocy' but, after the King's temporary recovery from insanity Richard was removed from office. Richard responded by claiming the throne for himself but this was challenged by the Lancastrian Duke of Somerset.

*It was a faction fight between families allied to the royal house contending for power and wealth and ultimately for possession of the Crown. On each side was ranged a group of great nobles, each with knights, gentry and captains attached to his person all conscious that their fortunes were involved in the rise or fall of their lord. The mass of people watched the struggle with indifference, only bargaining that they be spared the horrors of War.<sup>25</sup>*

For the masses, life went on, even when the Lancastrians gathered at Pontefract Castle and the Yorkists reached Richard's castle at Sandal on Sunday 21 December 1460. On Tuesday 30 December 1460 noise of battle may have been heard three miles away at Sowood as the 20,000 strong Lancastrian forces met with the 5,000 Yorkists at Wakefield Green and Sandal Castle. Richard had lost the Battle - and his head which was taken to York and placed on Micklegate Bar and 'crowned in mockery with a paper crown'

In Sowood, this interruption to normal life largely passed them by and little is known of the next 100 years or so. Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century however Sowood and the family who were farming it were re-visited by the Black Death.

*'In the year 1593, - in the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, -it appears from our Parish Registers that the Plague raged fearfully in these parts; and a curious fact is elicited that the unfortunate sufferers, no doubt to prevent the contagion spreading, were buried at their own houses: no wonder, therefore, that one whole family of the name of Denton- at least eight persons- were all swept away. I have made enquiries, but fruitlessly, as to the locality of Denton's house'.*

So wrote John Beswicke Greenwood MA Dewsbury Moor in his 1859 'The Early Ecclesiastical History of Dewsbury'. Perhaps unsurprisingly Beswicke was unable to locate John Denton's house. By 1859 none of the Wakefield Court Rolls had been transcribed but had they been he would found a clue in the record of the Tourn held at Wakefield on 25 April 1585.

This wasn't the first time that the plague had touched Sowood for in 1349 the owner of Sowood, Warin de Scargill, died of the plague although it is uncertain where he lived. This death was in the plague pandemic of 1348-1350 which killed 1.5m out of a population of 4m.

With the exception of some malpractice in the operation of Sowood Farm in the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century little of any real significance appears to have affected Sowood over the many centuries of its existence. Except for July and August 1593 that is.

In 1585 the Manor of Wakefield Tourn held at Wakefield on 25 April of that year found, inter alia, that '*Christopher Denton did not make his part of Sowodd lone gate: amerced 4d.*' The original sense of "gate" was not necessarily a structure but a means of access – for example a path or roadway. It was Denton's responsibility to maintain this way and failure to do so was a serious offence. As recently as 1881<sup>26</sup> whether you were approaching Sowood Farm from Ossett or from Horbury you would take the lane to Denton's ie *Denton Lane* to reach it. Things were to get worse for Christopher and the Denton family who lived, and several died, at the farmstead known today as Sowood Farm.

---

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*: page 141

<sup>26</sup> The 1881 Census

The Dewsbury Parish Register for July and August 1593 testifies to the horrors which were to descend on Sowood in the Summer of that year. Christopher Denton the elder and probably the eldest of those who were infected was the first to succumb. He was buried of the *plague* at his own house on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1593. His son, also Christopher, aged 23, was next to suffer the same fate on 31 July when he was buried on the same day as his 18 year old brother William. Four days later on 3<sup>rd</sup> August his children Isabell (aged 21), James (aged 16), Thomas (aged 11) and Margaret (aged 3) were buried with Alice Denton who was probably their mother. This brought to eight the total number of Denton family deaths from the Plague at Sowood Farm. All were buried there.

In addition the record reveals that others died of the Plague and were also buried at 'Denton's House' These unfortunates were Joanye Brouke<sup>27</sup>, Alice Nowell, Ann Ward, Agnes Ward and, as late as 21 September, John Boothe. It is possible that these were servants or employees of the Dentons or perhaps members of families who lived nearby and who had offered their help to the stricken Denton family. In addition to the thirteen who died and were buried at Denton's House, Thomas Sykes was buried at his house on Sowode Grene on 27<sup>th</sup> August and much later, Jane Willson was buried at Ossett of the plague at home on 18 December 1593. The same day Uxor [ie wife] Pickeringe was buried at Ossett of the plague. August to October were known to be "the plague months"<sup>28</sup> and this was certainly the case in this outbreak. There is no baptism record for Joanye Brook at Dewsbury All Saints but information<sup>29</sup> suggests she was born about 1560

It is also clear that the Plague raged more widely than Sowood for there were five deaths and burials caused by the plague in 'the leighes' – probably Thornhill Lees -in the same Summer months. They too were buried at home. The final record of a plague death around this time in the area was on 17 February 1594 when *Agnes wife of George Naylor buried of the plague at night here.*

This suggests a burial at Dewsbury All Saints Church and Agnes it seems may be the only plague victim of the 1593 scourge to be buried at Dewsbury Church in consecrated ground. Robert Grayve had been buried at night in November 1593 though there is no reference to the plague in this case. Ann Forrest was buried of the plague on 19 December but no location is given. In total sixteen burials of Sowood and Ossett people who died of the plague were recorded in 1593/4 and another five, perhaps seven, elsewhere in the Dewsbury area.

---

<sup>27</sup> In 2013 the Brook family own and occupy Sowood Farm

<sup>28</sup> A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles JFD Shrewsbury. Cambridge University Press 1970

<sup>29</sup> A database of local Brook family parish registrations

1592.	1593.
Feb. 2—Elizabeth daughter of John Grenewoode baptised.	July 14—Robert base son of John Harrope and Jenet Clayton baptised.
" 3—Edward son of Willme Barloe buried.	" 18—Christopher Denton elder buried of the plague at his own house.
" 4—Margrett daughter of Mrs.* Wilbe buried.	" 19—Joseph son of Robert Dey buried.
" 4—Averye son of Edward More baptised.	" 21—Mercye Arrandell buried.
" 10—Agnes daughter of Rychard Medlay baptised at Horbury and the same Agnes	" 25—Rosamond daughter of Rychard Forrest baptised.
" 11— was buried here the xi <sup>th</sup> daye.	" 26—John son of John Dawson baptised.
" 13—Robert Dey and Dorithye Walker married.	" 26—Alice daughter of James Kent baptised.
" 21—George Walker and Isabell Forrest married.	" 30—John Craven buried of the plague in the leighes.
" 25—George son of Gorge Lee baptised.	" 31—Christopher Denton younger buried of the plague.
" 26—Rychard Gopson and Agnes Gaunt married.	" 31—William Denton buried of the plague at their futher's house.
" 27—James Awdsley the younger was buried.	Aug. 3—Isabell Denton buried of the plague at home.
Mch. 11—Michael son of John Berrye baptised.	" 3—James Denton buried of the plague at home.
" 11—Henrye son of Christopher Brouke baptised.	" 3—Thomas Denton buried of the plague at home.
" 11—Philemon son of Christopher Dixson baptised.	" 3—Alice Denton buried of the plague at home.
" 18—Willme son of John Deyo baptised.	" 3—Margrett Denton buried of the plague at home.
" 23—Michael Ward <sup>e</sup> was buried.	" 3—Joanye Brouke buried at Denton's of the plague.
The begininge of the yeare Ano Dni 1593.	" 3—Ann Ward buried at Denton's house of the plague.
1593.	" 8—Alice Hudsonn buried of the place in the leighes.
Mch. 25—Perigryne son of Mr. Wilkinsonn baptised.	" 9—Thomas son of Thomas Langefeld baptised.
" 28—Joanye daughter of Willme Hall baptised.	" 10—Alice Nowell buried of the plague at Denton's house.
April 12—Rychard son of Robert Awdesley the elder baptised.	" 10—Agnes Ward buried of the plague at Denton's house.
" 14—Uxor Linley of Hangings Heaton was buried.	" 11—John son of Edward Wilkinsonn baptised.
" 17—Dorithie daughter of Raphe Slator baptised.	" 14—Thomas Acrod and Ann Tebbe married being Tuesday.
" 22—Nicolas son of Nicholas Walker baptised	" 15—Uxor Craven widow died of the plague and buried at home in the leighes.
" 22—A young son of Willme Barloe not baptised buried.	" 15—John Craven a young child buried of the plague in the leighes.
" 29—Edward and John sons of Willme Rychardsonn both baptised.	" 19—Isabell daughter of James Brouke baptised.
May 13—John son of Edward Ouldroyd baptised.	" 20—Agnes Hudsonn buried of the plague at home in the leighes.
" 13—Gorge son of Willme Gill the younger baptised.	" 21—James Brodley and Sibell Lee married.
" 20—Willme Tyas and Agnes Smithe married.	" 26—Dorithye daughter of Robte Barton baptised.
" 20—Ellen daughter of Lawrance Wamsley baptised.	" 26—Thomas son of Robte Awdesley the younger baptised.
" 27—Thomas son of Willme Burnett baptised.	" 27—Thomas Sykes buried at his own house at Sowode Grene.
June 2—Edward son of Willme Rychardsonn buried.	Sept. 10—John Nowell and Edan Boothe married.
" 8—John Robinsonn buried his wyfe.	" 16—Dorithye daughter of Henrye Nayler baptised.
" 10—John base son of John Jagger and Margrett Exam baptised.	" 21—John Boothe buried of the plague at Denton's house.
" 10—Jonye daughter of Robte Smithsonn baptised.	" 23—Dorithye daughter of Robte Barton buried.
" 14—Joseph son of Robert Dey baptised.	Oct. 2—Edward Megsonn and Grace Acrod married.
" 20—Elizabeth daughter of Rychard Brigge buried.	
" 24—Rychard son of John Nayler baptised.	
" 26—Willme Thomsonn and Elizabeth Carter married.	
" 30—Averye son of Edward More buried.	
July 1—Jenye daughter of Willme Hall buried.	
" 3—A young daughter of Nicholas Wood not baptised buried.	

\* The word is not distinct in the original.

### Extract from The Registers of Dewsbury 1538-1653 (S.J. Chadwick)

One Denton appears to have escaped with her life. Elizabeth Denton was baptised at Dewsbury, as were her siblings. In 1593 she was 19 years of age and there is no record of her death in 1593 or any year preceding or following. Perhaps she had the good fortune to be elsewhere.

The Plague or Black Death was characterised by its seasonal incidence in summer and early autumn months with a peak mortality in the August and September of a year. It was a peculiarly 'household' disease because it derived from the house rat or more particularly from the rat flea. Its origins however were in India and its existence in Great Britain had always depended upon the transmission of the disease by infected rats from beyond our shores, most usually through the Port of London. In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century the Plague manifested itself in pandemic form but land borne infections were much

reduced when sea trade began to replace land based trading. Outbreaks of the Plague in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century were many, sometimes significant in size and always a threat to human life but not to the extent of the Great Pestilence in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The Plague continued to be carried and caused by cross infecting house rats and their fleas and it often, but not invariably, led to outbreaks of human plague. Outbreaks rarely lasted for long either because of the onset of colder weather or because the rat population itself died out or became too small to be significant in local areas. This of course was of no significance or comfort to those humans who became infected due to their contact with rats or other people with the disease. In many cases the disease was confined to several or even single households and measures were usually taken to isolate the family from others to minimise the spread of the disease.

The following is an extract from a piece written about the effect of an outbreak of the plague in 1665 in Eyam Village in Derbyshire<sup>30</sup>. The Sowood outbreak would have been similar in nature and effect and the Dentons and others who lived at "Sowood Lane Gate" or were similarly infected would have been largely isolated and left to die.

*In the summer of 1665, in the village of Eyam in Derbyshire a tailor received a parcel of material from his supplier in London. This parcel contained the fleas that caused the plague. The tailor was dead from the plague within one week of receiving his parcel. By the end of September, five more villagers had died. Twenty three died in October.*

*Some of the villagers suggested that they should flee the village for the nearby city of Sheffield. But they were persuaded not to do this as it was feared that they would spread the plague into the north of England that had more or less escaped the worst of it. In fact, the village decided to cut itself off from the outside world. They effectively agreed to quarantine themselves even though it would mean death for many of them.*

*The village was supplied with food by those who lived outside of the village. People brought supplies and left them at the parish stones that marked the start of Eyam. The villagers left money in a water trough filled with vinegar to sterilize the coins left in them. In this way, Eyam was not left to starve to death. Those who supplied the food did not come into contact with the villagers.*

*To control the infection within the village they agreed firstly to bury their own dead, close to their homes, rather than in consecrated ground, in the belief that unburied corpses were a major hazard in the spread of the pestilence, so that speed was essential, and secondly to worship in the open air, where it would be possible to maintain corporate worship without being in close proximity with their neighbours and thus expose themselves to danger*

A few days after being infected, a victim developed a rash and there was pain all over the body. The victim began to feel tired and lethargic but the pain made it difficult to sleep. The temperature of the body increased and this affected the brain and the nerves. Speech was affected and the victims became less and less intelligible. As the disease took more of a hold, the victim took on the physical appearance of a drunk with stumbling movement and gait. The victim then became delirious.

After about six days, the lymphatic glands became swollen and inflamed. In the groin, neck and armpit areas of the body this led to buboes – large and highly painful swellings. These buboes caused bleeding underneath the skin, which turned the buboes and surrounding areas blue/purple. In some cases, red spots appeared on the buboes as death approached.

---

<sup>30</sup> [www.eyamplaguevillage.co.uk](http://www.eyamplaguevillage.co.uk)

The average time of death from the first symptom was between four to seven days. It is thought that between 50% and 75% of those who caught the disease died.<sup>31</sup>

Much of what is reported about outbreaks elsewhere also happened at Sowood. A single household, infection in the plague months of August and September, a short period of illness before an almost inevitable and painful death, isolation of a household or community, a family largely wiped out, burial at home and the plague declining in the late autumn as temperatures cooled.

All of this also required conditions conducive to rat infestation. This was 1593, five years after the failure of the Spanish Armada. Living conditions and hygiene within and beyond the home were not first on the list of important issues when the key concern was feeding a growing family. Moreover the home in which the Dentons lived was most probably timber built and may have been several hundred years old. It was also a farm with other livestock, feedstuffs, crops and nooks and crannies a many. Ideal rat country and within weeks thirteen victims were buried at Denton's house..

As the 16<sup>th</sup> Century drew to an end Sowood Farm must have been a desolate place. Unloved and perhaps unattended.

---

<sup>31</sup> [www.historylearningsite.co.uk](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk)



## The Marsdens 1676-1797

The 1600's began badly with the death in 1603 of Queen Elizabeth I the last of the Tudor monarchs . There had been signs however of climatic improvements and the turn of the century finally saw the end of the "Little Ice Age" with declining rainfall and a return to the type of summer that Britain had once taken for granted. With these changes food production increased and there began to be some stability in crop yields and prices

The tenure of Sowood Farm at this time in history is unknown. The family Denton were almost wiped out by the Plague in 1593. Local Parish Registers suggest that this was the only Denton family in the vicinity and there were few entries for the name before or after those of 1593. In nearby New Hall Farm at Overton the Marsden family began farming there in 1615 and continued in occupancy until 1651.<sup>32</sup>

The Marsdens had farming in their blood. Originating in the eponymous village to the west of Huddersfield in distant times the family had spread out across Yorkshire over very many years. The village name is of Anglo Saxon origin meaning '*a valley forming a natural boundary*'<sup>33</sup> and is recorded in the Wakefield Court rolls in 1274 as Marchesden.

But this is modern for Marsden and evidence of Mesolithic (stone age), camp habitation has been found there.<sup>34</sup> Those people of, and called, Marsden were farmers some 9000 years ago. Perhaps it was their 17<sup>th</sup> Century cousins' first view of Storrs Hill, across the Calder Valley from Overton, which convinced the Marsdens that this was a place in which they could flourish. What they saw was "*a valley forming a natural boundary*".

The Marsden ancestors may even have been in the area much earlier since there is evidence of Mesolithic activity at nearby Pugneys water meadow which has been described as one of the most extensive and important Mesolithic sites in West Yorkshire. Pugneys derives its name from *Pukenhale* "*goblins' nook of land*" it being believed that goblins were responsible for the presence of so much mesolithic flint on the surface there.

The Marsden family at New Hall between 1615 and 1651 would be relations of the Marsdens who finally settled at Sowood and Storrs Hill sometime later in about 1680. The Christian names of those baptised near Overton at the time do not however suggest that those Marsdens were immediate kin of the Sowood settlers. Evidence of the Marsden name echoes around Huddersfield hill country from Marsden itself to Wooldale and Scholes in the direction of Holmfirth to Almondbury and south to Kirkburton and Penistone.

It was from this latter, somewhat unlikely, location that Francis Marsden originated. He was to be the man who built, or as some<sup>35</sup> would have it, re-built, Sowood Farmhouse. A datestone, which reads "FM 1689" and the now almost obliterated name " Marsden"<sup>36</sup> above the Farmhouse door testifies to his presence

---

<sup>32</sup> Wakefield District Heritage [Kate Taylor 1976] pages 8 & 9 New Hall Overton Ken Bartlett

<sup>33</sup> English Place Names" 1961 by Kenneth Cameron

<sup>34</sup> West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey to A.D 1500 M.L. Faull & S.A. Moorhouse 1981 page 84

<sup>35</sup> Ibid page 471

<sup>36</sup> English Heritage erroneously record the name as "F flackender" or "F Mackender in the listing documentation & an Ossett Observer report 1986 reported the builder as F Mackender. The name would have been difficult to read 25 years ago and is now almost obliterated but it can just be made out as " Marsden"

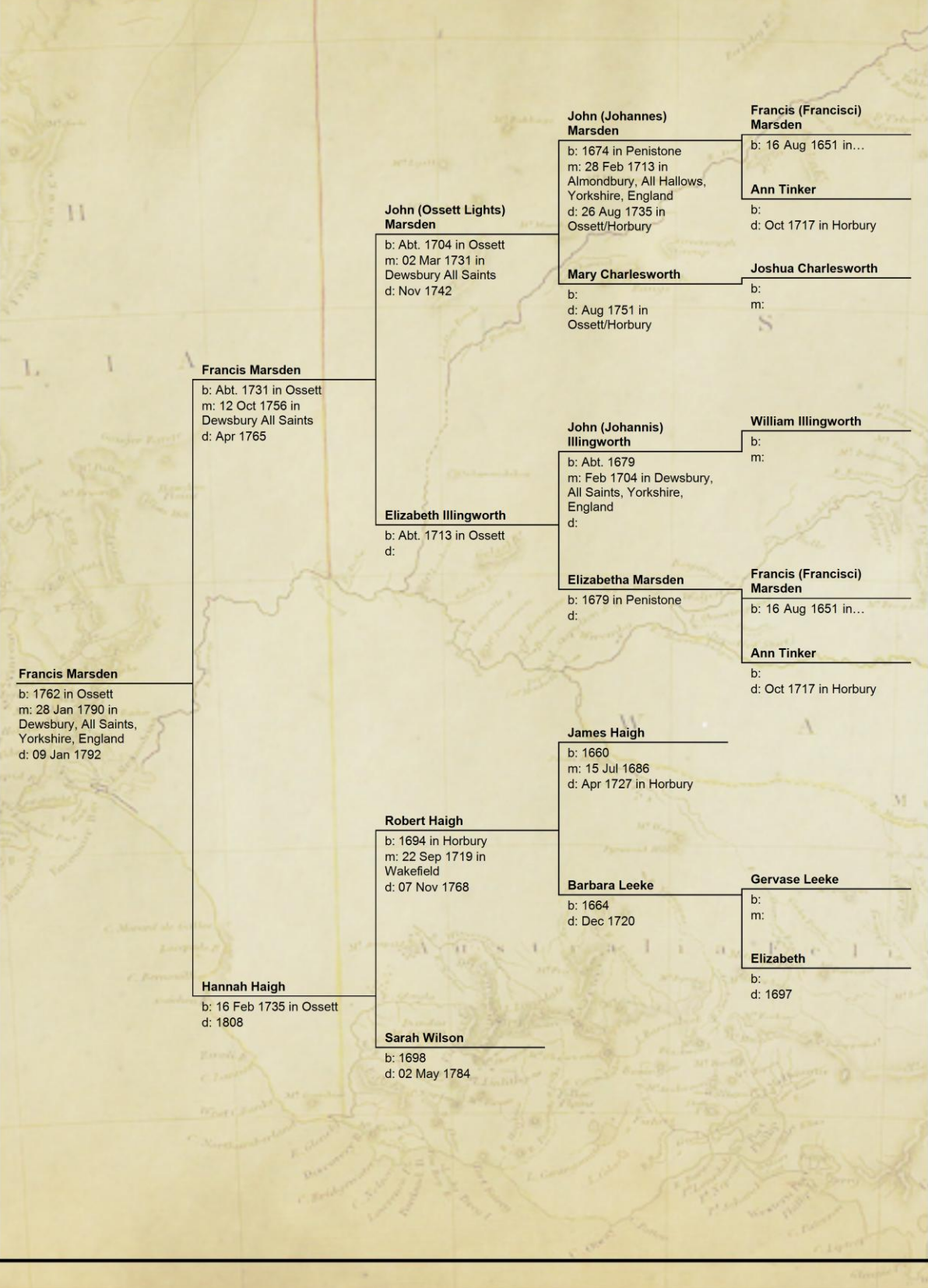


**Datestone above the door at Sowood Farm (October 2012)**

The Marsdens and the Beatson family were known to one another and indeed the Beatsons occupied New Hall Farm at Overton for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Before that they were farming land at Storrs Hill in Ossett and Horbury but by 1701 the Beatsons had taken up residence at New Hall and perhaps this left an opportunity for their Marsden friends to take over the farming at Sowood and nearby Storrs Hill.



The 18th Century Marsdens at Sowood Farm



Pedigree of Francis Marsden (1762-1792) and his siblings John (1764-1797) & Elizabeth (1757-1843)

## Francisci Marsden (abt 1651-1718) - the builder of Sowood Farm in 1689

**Francis Marsden** was baptised at Penistone, St John The Baptist Church on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1651 and was one of eight children born to Ricardi Marsden of that Parish. Until this family's arrival in Sowood in about 1680 there are no Marsden entries in the parish records for Ossett, Horbury (except for one stray), Wakefield or Dewsbury. It was clear that the Marsdens were late 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries incomers to Sowood. This branch of the Marsden family, and some others, often spelled their name Marsdin.

Many Ossett families can trace their roots to locations in the Huddersfield area; to places like Kirkburton, Almondbury, Brierfield, Thornhill and other places to the west of the township but Penistone was unusual. Later information from his sons' Wills demonstrate that this branch of the Marsdens maintained close links with families well known in these places and Penistone is the neighbouring parish to Kirkburton.

An analysis of the Penistone townships Hearth Tax Returns of Ladyday 1672 reveals evidence of a large number of families *"that had migrated south from their original homes in the Graveship of Holme, the parish of Kirkburton, the Huddersfield district and the Calder Valley. The Marsdens were by far the most numerous of these immigrants with fourteen households, followed by the Haighs with eight....."*<sup>37</sup>

In 1676 Francis Marsden of Middlecliffe, Thurlstone near Penistone acquired the copyhold interest in Sowood or Sowood House. The Court Roll of the Manor of Wakefield in 1676<sup>38</sup> records that.....***Richard Wormall testified by oath to this court that Thomas Purdue of Pudsey, gentleman, and his wife Priscilla (the aforementioned Priscilla alone attested and was examined by the steward of the court) on the eighth day of February last...this court...gave into the hands of the Lord by his hands all that messuage or tenement situated lying and existing in Ossett...called Sowood or SowoodHouse inhabited by Ed(mund) Lord and Ed(ward) Haigh together with all barns stables houses edifices folds halls dwelling houses bakehouses(?) and gardens with their appurtenances. Also two enclosures of arable land or pasture called or known by the name of the Inge and the Ox Close lying to the east or on the east side and some to the north of the aforementioned messuage containing approximately 11 acres more or less with all their woods and underwood lying or adjoining...in the tenancy of the aforesaid Edmund Lord or his assigns. Also all those five (?) enclosures of arable land or pasture containing approximately eighteen acres lying to the north or on the north side and some towards the west of the aforesaid messuage adjoin the ....called Storrshill on the south and the....called the Lights on the north side or lately in the tenancy of John White or his assigns...with all their water courses running water...commodities houses/cottages hereditaments and pertaining to the all and singular aforementioned messuage or tenement enclosures and premises lying or belonging to..... all of which aforementioned premises situated lying and being in the Reeveship (Graveship) of Ossett and are given annually to the Lord three shillings and five pence...for the work and use of Francis Marsden of Middlecliffe in the village of Thurlstone Reeve (Grave) and his heirs and assigns for ever....Francis Marsden his heirs and assigns for ever....according to the custom of the manor and shall give to the Lord...six shillings and six pence...***

The Court Roll refers to the copyhold interest being in Sowood House and also mentions the adjacent field names of the Ing(e) and Ox Close. These same closes will be mentioned in John Marsden's Will in 1735, in the 1843 Ossett Tithe Award by which time the Farm was held by John Nettleton's Executors and in later 19<sup>th</sup> Century property records concerning the Farm.

---

<sup>37</sup> The History of Penistone And District David Hey [Wharnccliffe Books 2002] page 63

<sup>38</sup> Kindly translated from Latin by Rosemary and David Arthur –December 2012

The circumstances by which Thomas Purdue, gentleman of Pudsey, became owner of the copyhold Sowood Farm and the adjacent twenty nine acres is unknown but on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1670 Thomas married Priscilla Raynor, by *licence*,<sup>39</sup> at Bradford St Peter's (Bradford Cathedral). Rayner is the name of a well known Horbury family<sup>40</sup> and it may be the case that Priscilla was from this line of Rayners and had inherited an interest in nearby Sowood. This may also be a reason why it was she, alone, who *attested and was examined by the steward of the Court* in 1676 although it may also have been the case that her husband, Thomas, had died. It may therefore be the case that the Rayner family owned the copyhold interest in Sowood prior to Thomas and Priscilla's marriage in 1670.

It is clear that Thomas Purdue did not work the farm in 1676 because, as the Court Roll made clear, the tenants of the *messuage* (singular) at Sowood were Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh. Edmund Lord, or his assigns, were working some of the land and John White, or his assigns, were working other parts. The 1672 Ossett Hearth Tax records Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh each charged tax on one hearth or chimney and this could be Sowood House. Was this to be the case it suggests that the messuage may have been providing accommodation for two families. The Hearth Tax record may also provide a further clue to the occupancy and ownership of Sowood Farm before 1676. Whilst the record does show Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh being charged on one hearth each (ie 2 shillings each) their names are not adjacent on the record. This could suggest that one of them may have been living elsewhere and had only moved to Sowood Farm between 1672 and 1676. The name in the 1672 Hearth Tax record next to Edward Haigh is *Major Reesby* paying on one hearth. This property is empty which confirms it is owned by Reesby (this name may have been wrongly transcribed) and since Lord is at Sowood farm in 1676 it may be that he only moved to the Farm between 1672 and 1676

There is scope to explore the history of Sowood Farm before 1676 and this research might be begin with further examination of the Wakefield Court Rolls at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. The names of Thomas Purdue, his wife Priscilla (nee Rayner) and Major Reesby should be the researcher's starting point.

There is evidence, running contrary to the 1672 Hearth Tax analysis, which suggests that Edmund Lord may have been at Sowood Farm earlier than 1672. The Horbury Parish Register records that *William son of Edmund Lord of Sowood buried the fifth day of February 1657*<sup>41</sup>. Edmund also had children baptised at Horbury in 1648, 1651 and 1652 but he also buried still born or infant children in 1655, 1657, 1661 and 1663. This places Edmund at Sowood, and quite possibly at the farm in 1657, and perhaps earlier in the early/mid 1640's. This is a mere 55 years after the Black Death killed the Denton owners or occupiers.

As this tale unwinds it will become clearer that Francis Marsden of Middlecliffe Thurlstone was the man who built or re-built Sowood Farm in 1689. Francis married Ann Tinker at All Hallows, Kirkburton on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1671. Even today there is a Tinker House Farm close to the Penistone/Kirkburton parish boundary and the Tinker name is common in the hill villages to the west of Huddersfield. Their first three children were baptised at Penistone between 1674 and 1679 and their last three children were baptised at Dewsbury between 1683 and 1689. This may suggest that even though he had purchased Sowood in 1676 he may have remained at Middle Cliff Thurlstone for a few years after his acquisition. Perhaps he was content to allow Edmund Lord and Edward Haigh to continue at Sowood,

---

<sup>39</sup> Only one other couple were married by licence at the Church between June 1670 and May 1671. Marriage by licence suggests speed was of the essence or a desire to deny parental objection to the marriage of a minor.

<sup>40</sup> A branch of the Horbury Rayner family was related to the Haighs and both families once owned Haggs Farm. On 26 November 1778 approximately 110 years after this marriage, a Priscilla Rayner, daughter of Joshua was baptised at Horbury.

<sup>41</sup> It is possible and intriguing to interpret this reference as "*Edmund Lord of Sowood*" although other references to him do not refer to Sowood.

*pro tem*, and the baptism records suggest he may not have moved his family to Sowood until sometime between 1680 and 1683.

There may also have been other reasons to keep Francis at home a little longer than he planned. 1669 appears to have been a tragic year for the Marsdens of Middle Cliff as first Francis' sister, Maria died in April, followed by his brother, Galfridus in May and his mother, Elizabetha, in November. All were buried at Penistone St John The Baptist Church. In May 1670 his sister, Margereta was buried at the same Church and his eldest brother, Johannes died in June 1674 when he was described as *Johannes of Middlecliffe*. Perhaps it was the combination of these events which caused him to seek his future elsewhere not least because his older brother Richard would now be in line to inherit his father's wealth. Having purchased Sowood in 1676 it might have been expected that he would move there soon afterwards but Francis was to suffer more tragedy in October 1678 when his father, Ricardi died. His burial record describes him as being "*of Middlelect*". It was, perhaps, this latest tragedy which delayed Francis's move as he, and his elder brother, Richard, came to terms with their loss and attended to their late father's affairs and the farm at Middle Cliff. As it was it appears that both Francis and his brother Richard left Thurlstone for Sowood in about 1680<sup>42</sup>

Penistone had become an independent parish by the 1120's at the latest and its area extends to almost 23000 acres – more than six times the area of Ossett parish. The largest of the eight townships within the Penistone parish was Thurlstone with about 8000 acres – 6500 acres of which were classified as wastes or commons until the 1812-1816 enclosure. Mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book as a small manor, Thurlstone, stretched westwards to Holmfirth and was once granted to the Saville family of Elland and later of Thornhill. Settlement in Penistone district before the industrial development of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century records nine mills along the banks of the River Don with the older farmsteads built on drier land on the spurs that projected from the hillsides. One of these farms was Middle Cliff, grouped along with others at the end of Lee Lane.<sup>43</sup> The farm probably dates from Elizabethan times or perhaps earlier but in either event it was the home of Francis Marsden and his parents before Francis purchased Sowood in 1676.

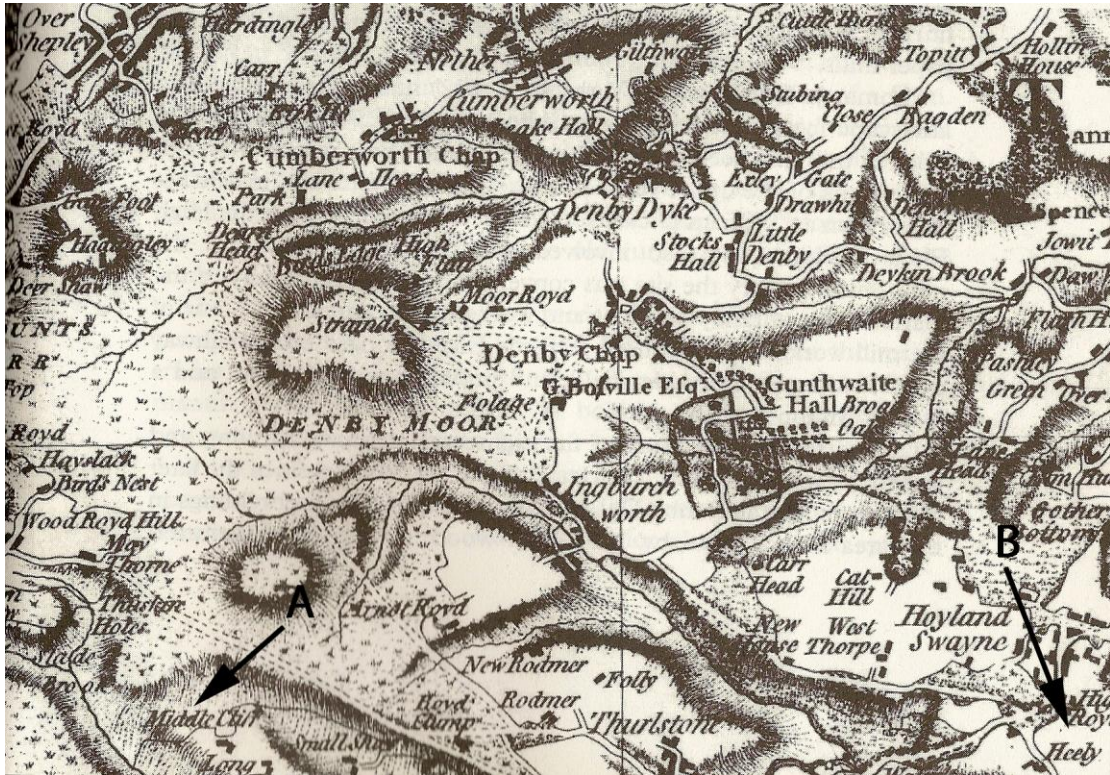
Francis married Ann Tinker at Kirkburton in April 1671 which may have been a convenient "half way house" between Holme (where the family name Tinker is well known) and the Penistone district for relatives to attend the wedding. Ann may however have originated from Tinker House, to the north of Storrs Dike, shown on Jeffery's 1772 map of the area. In many 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century maps farms are described as "House" for example Sowood House (Sowood Farm) and Haggs House (Haggs Hill Farm) in Ossett. Thus Tinker House was a farm and in 2012 it is still known as Tinker House Farm, Hoylandswaine. Tinker House was situated approximately five miles from Francis Marsden's family home at Middle Cliffe

---

<sup>42</sup> It is possible that the Richard who died in October 1678 was Francis Marsden's brother Richard rather than his father. If so, the Richard Marsden who was buried at Horbury in 1696 [see over] was his father, Richard.

<sup>43</sup> The History of Penistone & District David Hey [2002] Middlecliff farm still exists in 2012 and the house and barns are available for conversion to dwellings





**Jeffery's Map 1772 showing Middlecliff (A), Tinker House & Toad Hole (off lower right at B)<sup>44</sup>**

Prior to the identification of Francis Marsden's home at Middlecliff, Thurlstone near Penistone which was provided by the discovery of the 1676 Wakefield Court Roll it was thought likely that Francis may have lived to the east of Penistone near to Oxspring. The 1672 Hearth Tax records a Francis Marsden of Oxspring paying tax on two hearths. Although by this time Francis may only have been in his early 20's at this time, and unmarried he is the only Francis Marsden mentioned in the West Riding Hearth Tax records. He is also the only 17<sup>th</sup> Century Francis Marsden baptised at Penistone.

This belief that Francis may have lived near Oxspring was also based upon the location of the home of his great grandson John Marsden (1738-1779) who was born at Sowood Farm but moved to Toad Hole, Sim Hill Silkstone after his marriage to Martha Haigh in 1760. He had four children baptised at nearby Silkstone & Stainborough All Saints Church where he was buried in 1779. Was there a reason for John's emigration to Toad Hole Farm<sup>45</sup> Silkstone? John was the third son of John Marsden (1704-1742) but he was devised land in Ossett in his father's Will sufficient to keep him in Ossett. Could it be that Toad Hole Farm was a Marsden farm left to John?

In 1672 Toad Hole may even have been the home of Francis Marsden. It is very close to Oxspring and it was also close to Tinker House Farm where Francis' wife, Ann Tinker, may have lived. It was also 3 miles to Penistone Church where he was baptised, 3 miles to Silkstone Church where his great grandson christened his four children and where he was buried. It is 9 miles from Kirkburton Church where he married Ann in 1671 and 17 miles from Sowood Farm Ossett which he purchased in 1676.

<sup>44</sup> Toad Hole is not shown on the Jefferys 1772 map but Toad Hole did exist by 1763 as it is mentioned in the Silkstone burial record of John Marsden's 14 day old son Thomas Marsden. To indicate the location of Toad Hole it has been added to the above map.

<sup>45</sup> Toad Hole Farm Cottage, Sim Hill, Silkstone still exists today. Toad Hole may be derived from the Yorkshire dialect *T'owd* meaning *the old*



The Hearth Tax record suggests that Francis could have been at Oxspring in 1672 and that he may have moved to Middlecliff before 1676. Other circumstances also point to this being possible. The 1672 Hearth Tax record for Thurlstone (which includes Middlecliffe) shows Richard Marsden (Francis's father) paying tax on three hearths. Two doors away is a John Marsden (one hearth), Richard's eldest son and Francis' eldest brother who died in 1674. John's death could be a reason why Francis moved from Oxspring to Middlecliffe between 1672 and 1676—to help his father on the family farm at Middlecliffe.



**2012 Map showing Penistone, Middlecliff Farm, Tinker House Farm and Toad Hole Farm**

A 1686 Will for a different Richard Marsden, of *Rough Birchworth*, (slightly south east of Oxspring on the above map but in Oxspring township) records the names of his children as Ralph, William, Josias, *Richard*, Mary, Ann (Sargent) and Elizabeth (Mirblethwaite –possibly Micklethwaite). *Rough Birchworth*, Oxspring, Thurlstone and Penistone are all mentioned in the Domesday Book. This Richard Marsden was buried at Penistone on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1690 and his Will was proved shortly thereafter. Richard's Will contains a detailed Inventory of his home which comprises *the nether chamber, parlour, upper house, upper parlour, lower parlour, chamber over the lower parlour, corn chamber, and wain house*. The total value of Richard's estate is £177 1s.6d.

The 1672 Hearth Tax for Thurlstone also records a Ralph Marsden (one hearth) in Thurlstone but there is no other obvious Hearth Tax record for his father, the “other” Richard Marsden. There is evidence<sup>46</sup> of a 1698 Will of Ralph Marsden of Roughbirchworth, yeoman.....*his buildings consisted of an upper and nether house, an upper and little parlour, each with chambers above, a stable, a wainhouse*<sup>47</sup> and barns. After valuing his farm equipment at £11 16s 4d his neighbours listed

*1 horse, 1 mare 2 saddles etc £8 2s 0d, Barns: Oates and Hay £57 10s 0d, Barly, 20 stone of Wooll, £16 10s 0d, 6 oxen £30 2 stears £7, 6Cows 319 10s 0d, 2 heifers £5 5s 0d, 1 bullock 1 heifer 2 stearks 4 calves Swine £13 15s 0d Old sheep £50, 60 hog sheep £12*<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> A History of Penistone and District [David Hey Wharnccliffe Books 2002] page 67

<sup>47</sup> Wainhouse – farm wagon or cart house. Nether – lower.

<sup>48</sup> Hog sheep – unshorn sheep. Stearks or stirks – young bullocks or heifers under the age of two

The Roughbirchworth house occupied by Ralph Marsden at the time of his death in 1698 is the same as that occupied by his father Richard at the time of his death in 1690. This Richard's relationship to Francis Marsden is uncertain but it may be that Richard of Roughbirchworth and Richard of Middlecliffe were cousins. In this case their fathers would be brothers born about 1590 and their grandfather would have been born about 1560. This absence of a second Richard at Oxspring or Thurlstone in 1672 suggests that Ralph's father may not have been in the locality in 1672 and, interestingly, Francis's father only became known as Richard Marsden of Middlecliffe in the Penistone Church Register after 1673. This locational name may have been added to differentiate the two Richard Marsdens.

In any event it is probable that Francis and his wife and young family were accompanied to Sowood by his brother Richard<sup>49</sup> who is described as being of "Sawid Green" at his burial at Horbury in January 1696. Richard or Ricardi (baptised August 1646 at Penistone) and Francis were the second and third born sons and since the primogeniture<sup>50</sup> convention saw the father's estate devised to the eldest son it meant that any younger sons were often required to seek their fortunes beyond the parish boundaries within which they were born. In this case however Johannes, the eldest son, died in 1674 leaving Richard as the eldest surviving male child. In any event the 1676 Court Roll makes clear that Francis had sufficient money to acquire the copyhold interest in Sowood.

By 1709 Francis is recorded in the following references which are taken from an *account*<sup>51</sup> undertaken in that year of the state of the Manor of Wakefield which had been purchased by the Duke of Leeds in 1700. In the *account* he is one of only Ossett forty freeholders in the Constabulary of Ossett which puts him in the company of the Hepworths, Haighs, Whittakers, Oates, Illingworths, Nettletons, Scholefield and so on. Many of these names will be recorded in the company of the Marsdens over the next 70 years or so. He served with some of these individuals on a manor jury sworn to enquire 'into the old Rentalls & evidences' in the graveship of Ossett. He is listed in the findings of this jury 'for a Mess[uage] & lands on Sowood Green' for which he pays annual rent (4s 4d) to the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield. He, with others, is also required to serve as grave of Ossett albeit several years later in 1721. He did not live long enough to take up this office.

In the same *account* in 1709 Horbury Thomas Beatson is paying annual rent (3s 8d) to the Lord of the Manor Of Wakefield 'for a farme under Storshill in the occupation of Francis Marsden'. In addition to paying rent as a sub-tenant to Thomas Beatson, Francis pays rent (2d) 'for half an acre ith Westfield' to the Lord. As a consequence he is also obliged to accept his turn, with others, to serve as 'grave'<sup>52</sup> of Horbury. His turn for this office was set for 1730; an office he would not live to serve.

The reference to Beatson's farm under Storshill in Horbury graveship is interesting for several reasons. Beatson is paying 3s 8d annual rent to the Lord which is similar to the 4s 4d paid by Francis for a messuage and land at Sowood Green. This was Sowood Farm and associated land which in 1676 was about 29 acres. The record for Beatson's farm under *Storshil* does not mention a messuage and it is probable that Francis is farming Beatson's land (which is probably manor copyhold land) from the Sowood Farmstead. Since the rental charges recorded here are similar in amount this suggests that Francis was farming about 60-70 acres at this time; split almost equally between Horbury (Storrs Hill) and Ossett (Sowood). It is probable too that the farm would be mixed arable and livestock with beef and dairy cattle and wheat, oats and barley corn together with 'pease' and beans. Of course Sowood Farm would also include a range of farm buildings in addition to the Farm house.

---

<sup>49</sup> See footnote 40

<sup>50</sup> The convention whereby the father's estate passed to the eldest son.

<sup>51</sup> Manor of Wakefield Book 1709

<sup>52</sup> Grave – court official often elected to serve for one year

It is probable that Francis lived in the pre 1689 Sowood farmhouse which he purchased in 1676 and none of the 1709 records suggest Francis has more than one message. The 1676 Court Roll also refers to only one message and this may explain evidence of earlier timber structures on the site; the wood from which may have been used in the construction of the 1689 building.

Away from work the Marsdens were settling in to their new surroundings and Francis began to seek spouses for his four daughters. "*William Pollard and Mary Marsden of Sowwood Green married at Dusbury ye 2<sup>nd</sup> february 1699*" Mary Marsden was the eldest daughter of Francis and William Pollard was a wealthy man of Horbury Hallcliffe and from a long established Horbury family. Francis' daughter Elizabeth married John Illingworth of Ossett in 1704 and this was to be the first of several marriages involving the two families. Elizabeth and John Illingworth's daughter, Elizabeth, married Francis' grandson, John Marsden in 1731. In 1783 Francis Marsden's great great grand daughter, Mary Marsden, married Francis's great grandson, Joseph Illingworth and it was they who lived at nearby Rock Cottages. Little is known of Francis' youngest daughter Alicia (there is evidence<sup>53</sup> that she and her father were estranged) but Ann married a John Carter at Dewsbury in 1704 and it appears that they (Ann is recorded there in 1757) may have lived at Hallcliffe too.

But this story continues through the lives of his two sons Johannes (John) and Guilielmus (William) born in 1674 and 1689 respectively the first and last born children of Francis Marsden (1651-1718). Francis's wife Ann died in October 1717 and is buried at Horbury St Peter's and St Leonard's Church. Only four months later Francis Marsden died, aged about 66, and was buried in February 1718 at the same Church. He was described as "*Francis Marsden Yeoman*" - a free man owning his own farm. No Will has been located for Francis but his legacy, the Sowood farm which he had constructed or re-constructed, and the land which he had worked, passed to his eldest son John Marsden. John's only brother William (1689-1757), the youngest child and second son of Francis, lived in Horbury at Hallcliffe. It is not known if he purchased the land or if it was inherited from his brother in law William Pollard who married Mary Marsden in 1699. William died in 1757, a bachelor without issue, and he left most of his estate, albeit with some conditions, in his Will<sup>54</sup> to his nephew Joseph Marsden (1714-1758) who was the second son of John Marsden (see below).



**Sowood Farm about 1984** (Courtesy of Neville Ashby)

<sup>53</sup> For this see John's Will and page

<sup>54</sup> Reproduced by Ken Bartlett Wakefield and Horbury Volume 2 The Will of Horbury



### **John Marsden (1674-1735) eldest son of Francis Marsden (1651-1718)**

John Marsden, the eldest son of Francis, inherited Sowood Farm on his father's death in 1718. John was baptised at Penistone in April 1674 and arrived with his parents at Sowood in about 1680 aged 6. John married Sarah (probably nee Cartwright<sup>55</sup>) in about 1707 but she died and was buried at Horbury on 26th October 1712 after giving birth to their fourth child Hannah who had been baptised three weeks earlier on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1712 in the same Horbury Church. John was thus a widower with four children under the age of eight. He did what most widowers and widows did in those circumstances – he remarried.

In February 1713 John Marsden and Mary Charlesworth were married at Almondbury All Hallows Church providing further evidence that this Marsden family, whilst being of Penistone, had maintained links with the Huddersfield area. The Charlesworth name would also be seen later as Ossett landowners and the family is recorded at Horbury as early as March 1660.

By the time of his father's death in 1718 John was the father of seven children under the age of fourteen. His sisters had all married and left Sowood and his younger brother William would be almost thirty and probably living at Hallcliffe. John will almost certainly have remained living (and working) with his parents and siblings at Sowood Farm during his early years and may have continued to do so with his first and second wives and children until Francis' death. There is no reference in his Will of the family having more than one dwelling at this time.

John Marsden signed and sealed his Will on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1735 and he was buried at Horbury on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1735. Probate was granted to his wife Mary on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1735 when she made her mark in the presence of witness William Illingworth. This was an early example of the relationship between the Marsden and Illingworth families which was to be sustained for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

John was 61 years of age when he died but it is possible that as many seven of his children (five boys and two girls) were still living at home at the time of his death. His second wife Mary survived him. John's Will tells us a great deal about the 1735 Sowood Farm and the transcribed Will is attached in full. The Inventory which is attached to the Will has also been transcribed and is shown over the following pages with comments to follow. This Inventory is the present day Sowood Farm house as it was in 1735.

Before turning to an examination of the Inventory, a reading of the Will itself provides further evidence that this indeed was Sowood Farm and that it was occupied by John Marsden son of Francis Marsden. In his Will John Marsden writes of the one half of an acre in the Horbury Westfield which his father had in 1709. He writes of his messuage; *wherein I now dwell* and of *.... the Closes of Land Called by the names of the Ox Close now Divided in the Middle by a quickset hedge into two Closes and the Ing containing about fourteen acres lying at the east end of my fold.*

These are the Closes recorded in 1676 and shown, with the same field names, 167 years later on the 1843 Ossett Tithe Award Map they comprise about 14 acres and are to the east of and adjacent to Sowood Farm just as they were in 1735 and 1676.

---

<sup>55</sup> Admon 1723

*A True and perfect Inventory of the Goods and Chattels of John Marsden late of Ofsset and Diocese of York deceased as follows;*

	£	s	d
<i>His purse and Apparell</i>	3	0	0
<i>One Range Grate Tongs &amp; fire post</i>	19	0	
<i>One Sett pott a lb of suit &amp; Dripping pann</i>	14	0	
<i>Three Spitts two Bark Stones &amp; a pair of racks</i>	5	0	
<i>Five Chairs &amp; cushions a little table two buffets)</i>	16	6	
<i>Two forms and a long table</i> }			
<i>One Cupboard and long Sattel Hen Call<sup>56</sup> one Glass Case }</i>	13	0	
<i>And one wheat trough)</i>			
<i>One Clock</i>	1	9	0
<i>Pewter in the House Body</i>	1	14	0
<i>Two Beds with Bedding</i>	3	5	0
<i>Two Chests and a Buffet</i>	1	0	0
<i>One Long Table &amp; three little tables</i>	14	0	
<i>One Range &amp; Warming Pann</i>	5	6	
<i>One Bed &amp; Bedding &amp; a Chest</i>	1	8	0
<i>One Buffet one Table &amp; a Chest</i>	8	6	
<i>In one little Passage One Range a Wood Salting Flatt &amp; wood Vessell</i>	14	6	
<i>In Great Chamber, Two Beds &amp; four Chests</i>	2	8	0
<i>A parcel of Sacks and a Stroke<sup>57</sup></i>	16	6	
<i>In Less Chamber one Chest one Table &amp; Linnen</i>	1	15	0
<i>One Bed &amp; Bedding &amp; six Chairs</i>	1	14	0
<i>One Screen &amp; one Clock</i>	1	15	0
<i>Four Riddles &amp; two Scuttles</i>	3	6	
<i>Goods in the Oven House. One Range one Cupboard &amp; other Materials</i>	4	5	0
<i>Goods in the New Mistall. One Stee<sup>58</sup> &amp; other sort of wood</i>	15	0	
<i>In the Grain House. One Stee &amp; a Wheel Barrow</i>	5	6	

<sup>56</sup> Words in blue are illegible in the original

<sup>57</sup> A dry measure

<sup>58</sup> A ladder

<i>In the Barn one fann &amp; one Stee</i>	10	0	0
<i>One Wheat Mough</i>	8	0	0
<i>Hay in the Lesser Barn</i>	6	0	0
<i>In the ffield. Two Hand Ferks &amp; one Sled</i>	7	0	0
<i>In Manure</i>	5	5	0
<i>One Cart &amp; Sowing Hepper</i>	4	0	0
<i>One Stone Trough</i>	5	0	0
<i>One pigg &amp; Grinding Stone</i>	1	0	0
<i>Corn in ye Upper ffield</i>	6	10	0
<i>Corn in Storge Hill Close</i>	5	10	0
<i>ffour horses</i>	10	10	0
<i>One Black Mare</i>	4	15	0
<i>One Cart &amp; Cart Ropes</i>	3	10	0
<i>Herse Goods</i>	2	2	6
<i>One plough &amp; two pair of Harrows</i>	1	4	0
<i>Corn in Ox Close</i>	6	0	0
<i>Corn in Sallet Reid</i>	4	7	6
<i>Barley in Flatt Close</i>	10	10	0
<i>ffour Cows</i>	7	10	0
<i>Beans in Herbury ffield</i>	1	5	0
<i>Corn in Healey</i>	4	4	0
<i>Ten Sheep</i>	1	1	0
<i>Geese Hens &amp; Ducks</i>	15	0	0
<i>One Rowler Maund &amp; Basketts &amp; all other Hustlements</i>	10	0	0
<i>Total</i>	140	17	6

Robert Haigh  
Joshua Haigh  
John Illingworth

*Debts owing by the Deceased as followeth.*

<i>To W<sup>m</sup>. Pellard</i>	3	3	0
<i>To Thos. Longfield</i>	4	0	0
<i>To Mr Betsen for Rent</i>	3	3	0
<i>ffor two Acres Rent in Healey</i>	2	18	0
<i>To John Archer for Work</i>	2	10	0
<i>To Jonathan Pease for Shoes</i>	2	6	0
<i>More for Manure</i>	10	0	0

To Josias Morten for Malt	2 12 6
To Josias Hepworth	1 17 6
More for Interest	4 11 0
To Arthur Thompson	1 2 6
To Mr Scott for Coals	4 17 3
To W <sup>m</sup> . Walker Apothecary	2 11 5
To Thomas Moss for the Coffin	14 0
To Joseph Taylor	<u>10 0</u>

*Debts owing to ye Deceased as ffollows*

At Miln for Coals Loading	3 0 0
Of Mr Nowinsen for Coals	1 10 0
Of Mr Genezics for Coals	1 10 0
Of Robert Walker for two Loads	8 0
Of Mr Pearson for one Load	4 0
Of John Emmerson for one Load	3 6
Of W <sup>m</sup> ffield for three Load	12 0
Of W <sup>m</sup> . Tutler for Coals	<u>2 0</u>
	<u>7 9 6</u>

*Debts owing by the Deceased in Small Sums as above mentioned is* 39 12 2

*Debts further owing by the Deceased in larger Sums as ffollows*

To Mr W <sup>m</sup> Oates	30 0 0
To John Pellard	20 0 0
To Widow Jobson	20 0 0
To John Naylor	10 0 0
To John Scholesfield	5 0 0
To John Archer	<u>6 0 0</u>
	91 0 0
	39 12 2

*Total of ye Debts by ye Deceased is* 130 12 2

**The Inventory & Will** reveals that Sowood Farm house comprised a *parlour, the housebody, a little passage, a great chamber* and a *less chamber*. The *oven house* may also be part of the farmhouse. The was probably structured, much as it is now, on the basis of two rooms at the front ground floor level and one or two small rooms (including the little passage) at rear ground floor with two rooms above. The parlour was to the east of the farmhouse as is made clear in John's Will where he leaves to *his now loving wife all that parlour at the east end of my said Messuage with a Convenient Way to the same for her habitation*

It is interesting that in his Will he uses the term 'my **now** loving wife Mary' which may suggest a time when she didn't love him but it is certain that this was stated to define her as his wife 'now' since Mary was his second wife. There are six beds recorded in the farmhouse Inventory which more or less fits the family size at that time. There would be three sleeping rooms, including the parlour, one of which would be occupied by John and his wife and the other two by the four boys and two girls who were probably still living at home. One of the chambers has a screen perhaps to preserve modesty. One of the rooms had a range for cooking and to provide a source of heating. The Clock, the beds and bedding were the items of most value in the Inventory.

In addition to the farmhouse there was an Oven House, a new Mistall, a Grain House and a Barn. An assortment of farm tools, implements and equipment is listed along with livestock including sheep, hens, geese, ducks, pigs, cows and horses. The value attached to each stock type in the Inventory emphasises the importance of each to the farm and the family. Corn is the main crop in this mixed farm with nearby fields at Ox Close, just across the Horbury boundary at Sallot Royd and on Storrs Hill but also in Healey. Barley, and a lot of it by value, is being grown at Flatt Close which is likely to be one of the fields near the River Calder between Healey Road and Storrs Hill Road. Beans are grown on the half an acre in Westfield Horbury which was once also in the ownership of John's father, Francis.

The Inventory is signed by *Joshua Haigh, Robert Haigh and John Illingworth* and it is these three men who will have prepared and valued John Marsden's chattels.

*Joshua Haigh* was a Woolstapler of Longlands House on the Wakefield to Halifax Turnpike Road at Flushdyke and at one time farming land in Healey which he rented from Joseph Haigh (and subsequently inherited on Joseph's death)

*Robert Haigh* was a farmer and Tanner of Hags Farm in Ossett. He was the son of James Haigh (the long term Minister of Horbury St Peters in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century) and Barbara Leeke ( a descendent of Leekes who were once influential Stewards of the Manor of Wakefield). Robert Haigh was also the father of Hannah and Martha Haigh who respectively married John's grandsons Francis and John Marsden in 1756 and 1760. The Haighs and the Marsdens were close but not quite as close as the *Illingworth* family as has been seen earlier.

John's debts were significant too which may be a product of his illness or the state of the farm and cropping at that time. His assets are barely sufficient to cover his liabilities although the three valuers do appear to have had some difficulty with the arithmetic. His schedule of "small debts" includes dues to his brother in law, William Pollard, perhaps for rent for Pollard's Horbury land, including nearby Sallot Royd and perhaps land at Hallcliffe.

He owes "Mr Betson" (Mr Beatson) £3 3s 0d for rent which probably includes the land under Storrs Hill which his father Francis is recorded as occupying in 1709. The Beatsons had moved to New Hall Farm at Overton by 1701 and remained there for most of the rest of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Wakefield District Heritage by Kate Taylor pages 8&9

John owes £4 11s 0 “more for interest” which is assumed to be interest on borrowed money, suggesting that he may have needed this to finance his debts at least pending him bringing in and realising the value of his crops and stock. He also owes £2 5s 11d to the Apothecary (suggesting he may have been ill for some time) and 14s 0d for his coffin. His more significant debts include £30 rent to William Oates. In 1775 the Marsdens are renting land from Edward Oates (William’s son) between Storrs Hill Road and Healey Road on land which runs down to the River Calder. This land was part of Sowood manor<sup>60</sup>

Taken together with the land adjacent to Sowood Farm, the Pollard lands in Horbury, the Beatson lands at Storrs Hill and the Oates lands at Healey (and other rentals) John is paying approximately £1 10s 0d per acre for land at Healey and his total debts for rent appear to be about £100 which equates, on this basis, to 70 acres. He has 15 acres at Sowood. This suggests a farm holding comprising about 80-90 acres, mostly rented. John died in August 1735 and at the time of his death he has approximately £40 value in corn and barley unharvested in his fields. In addition John is owed money for “coals”, and for “loads” which may be manure or harvested corn. His heirs will need every penny of this, and more, to pay his debts. The Will itself also prompts a few observations;

John’s Trustees were named as Joshua Hirst of Slaughtwaite, Christopher Tinker of Holme and William Pollard of Horbury. His daughter Elizabeth married William Pollard in 1699 in Horbury and his daughter Anne married Abel Tinker in 1730. That Christopher Tinker and Joshua Hirst are of Holme and Slaughtwaite demonstrates continuing links with the area south west of Huddersfield and their status as Yeomen says something of their being.

The Will also mentions *Closes of Land called by the names Storge hill Close, Long Ing, Cow Close, upper fields, horse Close, Calf Croft, Half Croft Close* and further reference to these closes are mentioned in later family Wills. The locations of some are easier to identify than others and, unfortunately for local historians, field names change over the years particularly as fields become divided among heirs. Most, if not all, of these named closes are situated on land at the top of Storrs Hill directly opposite Sowood Farm and on the Ossett side of the boundary with Horbury. Over the following years the fields in this area are worked almost exclusively by the Marsdens and their extended family – the Illingworths and Nettletons.

It is interesting too that John’s Will names these fields as though they are linked in some way but lists Ox Close and the Ings (both adjacent to and part of Sowood Farm itself) separately. Certainly some, if not all, of John’s landholdings were copyhold as is confirmed by his Will in the words; *I have by my writing of Surrender bearing even date herewith surrendered with a straw into the hands of the Lord of the Mannor of Wakefield according to the customs thereof.* John has the right to leave copyhold land to his heirs but only with the consent of the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield<sup>61</sup>.

John’s second child and eldest daughter, Alicia, wife of Jonathan Sykes, is left only one shilling which is usually a sign that the child has been disinherited. The reference to the child in the Will, albeit being left only a token amount, serves as a defence against any claim that the child has been overlooked in the Will by mistake due to the infirmity etc of the Testator.

What might have been the circumstances leading to this apparent estrangement? Alicia Marsden was born on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1706 and she married on 7 September 1727. She was 21 years and 1 month old at

---

<sup>60</sup> The Manor of South Wood Green Sowood Ossett [Alan Howe 2013]

<sup>61</sup> Wakefield Court Roll 1735 Yorkshire Archaeological Society reference MD/225/1/463 (130) reveals the farmhouse (excluding the parlour) was surrendered but there is no mention of the Ox Closes or The Ing land suggesting that this land was freehold land. In 1676 however Ox Close and Ing were recorded as copyhold suggesting Francis may have enfranchised this part of the holding between 1676 and 1735.

the time of her marriage which allowed for Banns to be read after her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and for her marriage to be confirmed within a month thereafter.

In 1727 minors (ie those aged under 21) could not be married by licence without consent and marriage banns could be forbidden by the parents. Without consent, Alicia could not marry, except by clandestine means, until after her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and would require one month for three readings of the marriage banns. It is possible that John and Mary objected to her marriage to Jonathan Sykes and in spite of those objections Alicia married the man she loved but only when she was of age and no longer required parental consent. She was not to be forgiven by her father.

Reference is made above to the tenure of Sowood and the adjacent land to the east of Denton Lane and to the Storrs Hill land to the west of Denton Lane which was also worked by the Marsdens. Conflicting documentation has been unenlightening in determining tenure but the 1735 Wakefield Court Roll offers an explanation and also expands on a comment in John Marsden's Will of the same year in relation to the farmhouse parlour. The 1735 Court Roll reveals that John Marsden has surrendered to the Lord of the Manor the farmhouse (*except one room part of the said messuage called the parlour with liberty of ingress, egress and ??? from the said room*). This was the parlour which John left (a life interest) to his wife Mary (nee Charlesworth) and required his son, John, to make her *a convenient way*. Since this part of the farmhouse was not surrendered it suggests that Mary already had a copyhold right of occupation which one presumes had been granted previously to her and her husband John. This Court Roll also confirms that the farmhouse was copyhold.

The 1735 Court Roll also records the surrender of those closes mentioned in John's Will (Closes of Land called by the names Storge hill Close, Long Ing, Cow Close, upper fields, horse Close, Calf Croft, Half Croft Close) indicating that these too are copyhold lands. The Roll also informs the reader that these closes, to the south west of Denton Lane total approximately 20 acres. The Court Roll however makes no mention of the land called the Ox Closes and the Ing to the east of Denton Lane suggesting that these fields were freehold. They were however mentioned in the 1676 Court Roll when Francis appeared to purchase the copyhold interest in these closes and the farm house. If they were not copyhold by 1735 this suggests that Francis or John must have enfranchised the land, by purchase, between 1676 and 1735. It is known that these fields total about 15 acres. Added to the other 20 acres to the south west this means the Marsdens, at this time, were farming about 35 acres of their own copyhold and freehold land in addition to any they may have rented from other owners.

The 1735 Court Roll, somewhat confusingly refers to John Marsden devising the named closes above and the farmhouse (excluding the parlour) to William Pollard of Horbury Yeoman from the date of the Roll and for the term of 500 years. A Deed (freehold) of September 1736 leases the farm (excluding the parlour) and the above closes to William Pollard which suggests that the land and the farm had been enfranchised (become freehold) by 1736. This was possibly done at John's death in 1735. William Pollard was the son of William Pollard and Mary Marsden and the lease arrangement must have been short lived for the Pollards have never been recorded at Sowood Farm whereas it is known that the Marsdens continued here until 1797 when the farm holding was left to Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) by her brother John.

In all of this history there is a tendency to concentrate on the eldest son who, on each occasion in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, becomes the heir to Sowood Farm. There is so much more to the Marsdens and their influence on this part of Ossett which cannot be considered in this history. The stories of the Marsdens, the Illngworths and the Nettletons at Sowood and Storrs Hill are related in more detail in companion histories published in 2013<sup>62</sup>.

However before this history moves on to the next Sowood Farm Marsden a comment about John Marsden's fifth child and second son, Joseph Marsden (1714-1758).

Most of the Marsdens, by accident or design, remained on the Ossett side of the Ossett –Horbury boundary. Ken Bartlett refers to this fact in his History of Wakefield and Horbury<sup>63</sup> as follows;

The Marsden family see pages 1 & 12 originated from Ossett, mainly from Sowood Farm, just over the Ossett Horbury boundary. The lintel over the front doorway has the initials of the Marsden family and a late seventeenth century date. The two wills in this volume are those of William and Joseph Marsden the sons of John Marsden of Horbury (see pedigree page 3). There are frequent mentions of members of the family in Horbury Parish Registers and other documents because they lived so close to Horbury that could not help becoming involved in some of the affairs of the township.

There are, as he remarks, frequent examples of the Marsdens' baptisms, marriages and burials at Horbury but none before the 1680's except for one stray 'base begotten' child in the 1640's. The Marsdens did become involved in the affairs of the township and the start of this involvement was the marriage of Mary Marsden to William Pollard in 1699. Mary's Uncle William Marsden (1689-1757) lived at Hallcliffe sometime after this as is clear from his Will when he left his property there to his nephew Joseph Marsden – the second son of John Marsden.

Unfortunately Joseph died the year after his Uncle and he may not have lived at Hallcliffe, but he had probably moved from his father's Sowood farm home, after his marriage in 1740. There is evidence<sup>64</sup> to suggest that this home could have been a dwelling which approximately 100 years later would become the Halfway Beerhouse in Horbury Parish which was situated at the junction of Denton Lane and a lane which was subsequently to become named *Matty Marsden Lane*.

At the time of his death in 1757 Joseph was working about 30 acres of land at Storrs Hill in Horbury, as an undertenant of Anby Beatson. This is the same, or part of the same land worked by his grandfather, Francis, in 1709 as sub tenant of Thos. Beatson who was Anby Beatson's father. This puts Joseph at Storrs Hill and the possibility is that he also lived there or thereabouts. The 1790 Manor Estate Map shows only one dwelling on the Horbury part of Storrs Hill and that is at the junction referred to above.

More detail of this possible 18<sup>th</sup> Century Marsden link to the Halfway House and Matty Marsden Lane is recorded elsewhere in this research

---

<sup>62</sup> *The History of Sowood Manor, The History of the Rocks and The History of Halfway House & Matty Marsden Lane* [Alan Howe 2012] <https://ossettheritage.co.uk/local-history/overview/>

<sup>63</sup> Bartlett reports that one of the two Marsden Wills in his writings is of William son of John Marsden. It is however the Will of William who was the Uncle of John Marsden.

<sup>64</sup> *The History of Halfway House & Matty Marsden Lane*



Ken Bartlett also records that;

There are two other important roads in Horbury, the road from Horbury to Ossett via Sowood and also the road from Northgate to Ossett via Hallcliff. The road from High Street to Ossett via Westfield Road had two names, Westfield road or lane from highfield road to The Half Way House, from Half Way House to the Ossett boundary it was called Denton Lane. The road then turned left through Sowood and the Green into Ossett. There was no Station Road that was built later. Matty Marsden lane is obviously called after someone of that name but in all my research I have not come across anyone of that name, either Matthew or Matilda. The Marsdens were an Ossett family mainly and Matty was probably an Ossett person. A branch of the Marsden family lived at Sowood Farm just over the Ossett boundary, their initials are on the lintel over the front door with the date 1689.

The road which connects the top of Northgate through Spring end and what was known as Ossett Spa to Haggs and Queens Drive is also an old one, there are many references in the parish registers to persons from Haggs.

With the advantages bestowed on 21<sup>st</sup> Century historians it is now known that the Marsden family lived along these "two other important roads in Horbury" ie brother and sister William and Mary (Pollard nee Marsden) at Hallcliffe and John at Sowood Farm. The excerpt from Bartlett also reminds us that Denton Lane (Horbury) was the name of the stretch of road between Sowood Farm and The Half Way House. His observations regarding the origins of Matty Marsden Lane are considered elsewhere.

John Marsden (1674-1735) was buried at Horbury on 26 August 1735. He would have died at Sowood Farm a few days earlier surrounded by his family – perhaps with the exception of the estranged Alicia. John had his last word on this issue. Unusually for the time all of John's children survived him as did his widow Mary Marsden (nee Charlesworth)

As shown earlier John Marsden left most of his lands and property to his eldest son, also John Marsden (1704-1742)

### **John Marsden (1704-1742) eldest son of John & grandson of Francis (1651-1718)**

John Marsden, eldest son of John and grandson of Francis Marsden was baptised at Horbury on 26 December 1704 and was buried at the same Church on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1742 aged 37. His Will refers to him as John Marsden of Ossett Lights<sup>65</sup> and he was the first of several male 18<sup>th</sup> Century Marsdens of this line who died at a young age. John Marsden married his cousin Elizabeth Illingworth at Dewsbury on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1731; Elizabeth was the daughter of John Illingworth and Elizabetha Marsden (who was John's aunt). Three of his four children (all male) and both of his male grandchildren died under the age of 41.

In January 1741 John Marsden was one of only twenty nine Ossett "40 shilling" freeholders who took the trouble to journey to York Castle to cast their vote in *The Poll for a Representative in Parliament for the County of York*. He was accompanied by William Marsden, which could have been John's brother but was more probably his Uncle William. Voting lasted 8 days and votes had to be cast by a spoken declaration, in public, at the hustings.

Of the twenty nine Ossett voters only nine voted for the Whigs who were the party of Government in 1741 with Walpole as Prime Minister. The By Election result in Yorkshire resulted in a defeat for the Tory Fox. The Ossett voters must have seen the writing on the wall in spite of an overall Yorkshire vote for the Whigs for within 12 months Walpole and the Whigs had gone after 21 years in power. It appears that the younger contingent of the Ossett voters voted for change and cast their vote for the opposition Tory whilst the older Ossett voters cast their vote in favour of the Whig party in power. John and William Marsden were among that younger contingent voting for change.

John survived his father by only seven years and would have taken over Sowood Farm on the death of his father in 1735. It is not likely that much had changed on the Farm in those seven years even more so because it is also unlikely that John lived here after his father's death. Instead his mother, Mary remained at Sowood probably with the youngest (born between 1715-1724) four or five of her ten children. John's father had left instructions in his Will that Mary should have the parlour, at the east side of the farmhouse, with a convenient way, for the rest of her natural life. He added that *my Will and mind also is that my said Son John Marsden shall remain peaceably and quietly upon the farm and premises which he now occupies until the day that he remove to the place where I do now Inhabit*.

Unusual words perhaps but this appears not to be an instruction to John that he should re-locate to Sowood Farm but it is equally clear that his father expected it at some stage – perhaps when his widow Mary died. It is uncertain where John was living at this time but it seems probable that he had been there since his marriage in 1731 to Elizabeth Illingworth. He could therefore have been in an Illingworth property but wherever it was he was described at his death in 1742 as *John Marsden of Ossett Lights*. This suggests he was living and working land somewhere to the east of Sowood Farm, towards Manor Lane, Ossett Spa and Low Common. It is doubtful that he was far away from Sowood Farm and one other possibility is that he was living in a dwelling further along Sowood Bend on the same side of Denton Lane as Sowood farm and still within Ossett Parish. This location would be classed as Ossett Lights and it is shown on the 1790 Wakefield Manor Estate map. This location, on Westfield Road but within the Ossett parish, is today a pair of semi detached houses built around 1900.

---

<sup>65</sup> From *Leah* (Old English) a forest, wood, glade. *Leaht* (Old English) a channel

Wherever he was it is certain that he was not living at Sowood farm at the time of his death in 1742 and his Will makes mention of two dwellings. One is the dwelling in which John's mother, widow Mary Marsden – nee Charlesworth - lives ( ie Sowood Farm). This is left to his wife Elizabeth for her life and then to his eldest son Francis who is aged 10 at the time of his father's death. He also leaves to Francis all those three Closes of arable and meadow called the Ing and Ox Closes which were adjacent to Sowood Farm. Francis is required to pay out of these lands £10 to each of his brothers if alive at the time of the death their grandmother, Mary Marsden, and when they attain age 21.

In addition John also leaves to Francis, that Messuage or Tenement *wherein I now live with all that Garden Orchards Barns Stables Cowhouses and buildings thereto belonging with one close of meadow called Calf Croft.*

The Calf Croft Close was left to Francis by his father in 1735 when there was no mention of a messuage suggesting that this might have been built between 1735 and 1742; after John's marriage in 1731. Calf Croft was one of the six Closes mentioned together, and separate to those at Sowood Farm in John's Will. Wherever Calf Croft it was in the area of Ossett Lights and the range of buildings suggest it was a reasonably substantial holding. Francis is required to pay his mother, Elizabeth, £2 10s 0d per annum for the use of this.

John Marsden left the bulk of his estate, including two messuages to his eldest son Francis but he had three other sons and, contrary to the custom, he left land in his Will to each of them. William (1733-1777) was the second eldest and he was left a close of meadow called *Storrs Hill Close*. William was eight or nine years old when his father died. To his next son John (1738-1779) aged three or four when his father died, he left a Close of pasture called *Cow Close* and to his youngest son, Thomas (1739-1802), he left a close of meadow called *Long Ing*. All of the land left by John to his children had been left to him by his father seven years earlier in 1735. The lands left to his youngest sons are all located on Storrs Hill opposite Sowood Farm.

His 29 year old widow Elizabeth is left John's chattels and personal estate. She is also left four boys all under the age of 11. Two of her children are under the age of four. It is unlikely that she will be able to run a farm in these circumstances and she would be forced to call upon help from her Marsden in laws. Fortunately there were many of them and most were young enough to help out. In 1747 Elizabeth Marsden "widow of John" married Robert Archer at Dewsbury all Saints.

John Marsden's Will is dated 15 October 1742 and he was buried three weeks later, on 7<sup>th</sup> November at Horbury. He signs his own name, spelt Marsdin, and adds his seal. The Will is witnessed by Edward and Thomas Oates and by his younger brother, William. His wife is named as Sole Executrix and probate is granted, almost 16 months later, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1744 when widow Elizabeth Marsdin makes her mark which is witnessed by her brother in law, Richard Marsdin, Yeoman. Additional signatories to probate are Benjamin Wilson and Thos Oates. The Will does not include an inventory

A chapter closes on one Marsden and another opens for Francis Marsden, aged 11, who inherits most of his father's estate including two houses.

### **Francis Marsden (1731-1765) eldest son of John & great grandson of Francis (1651-1718)**

Francis Marsden was baptised at Horbury on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1731, the eldest son of John and Elizabeth Marsden (nee Illingworth). He was one of four brothers. He married Hannah Haigh of Haggs Farm, daughter of Robert Haigh, at Dewsbury on 12 October 1756. They had five children, two of whom, Sarah and Mary, pre-deceased him. Francis Marsden was buried at Horbury on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1765. He was 34 years of age and left his 30 year old widow with three children, Elizabeth (aged 7), Francis (aged 3) and John (not yet one year of age)

These were circumstances which almost mirrored those of 1742 when Francis' father John died , aged 38, leaving a young widow and children. Francis was aged 11 when his father died and his short life would not have simple, easy or, perhaps, particularly pleasant. At the time of his father's death he was not living at Sowood Farm but elsewhere on Ossett Lights and it is likely he remained there for a while after 1742. His widowed mother, Elizabeth (nee Illingworth) married again in 1747, this time to Robert Archer, from a well known Ossett family. He too was a widower.

It is possible that Elizabeth and Robert moved to his (Robert's) home and that he brought up his four stepsons there rather than at the Ossett Lights home or at Sowood Farm where Francis' grandmother lived until her death in 1751. At this time Francis was aged 19, still young to be running his Farm but no doubt the Marsden family, his Uncles and great Uncles in particular would have rallied round to help young Francis learn the farming business.

Francis' responsibilities however had grown beyond Ossett where he had become heir to Sowood Farm and his home on Ossett Lights. In 1757 his grand Uncle William Marsden (1689-1757) of Hallcliffe. died leaving Hallcliffe to Francis' Uncle Joseph but leaving lands at Southowram near Halifax to young Francis, then aged 26. In the ordinary course of events these land holdings at Ossett and Southowram would represent great opportunities to a young man but for Francis it was not to be.

It is probable that Francis moved to Sowood on his grandmother's death in 1751 to work the farm and the associated land at Storrs Hill though some of this latter land had now been left to his brothers in his father's Will proved in 1744. There is more of **Francis' brothers, William (1733-1777), John (1738-1779) and Thomas (1739-1802)** in this history and elsewhere<sup>66</sup> but a little more is referred to below.

**William** remained in Ossett and working land. He died young having married in September 1762 and had one child, Mary Marsden (1763-1849) who married Joseph Illingworth in 1783. William built and lived at The Rocks - Rock Cottage (then a single dwelling but much later divided into more dwellings) which was situated at the top of Storrs Hill. His daughter Mary inherited the land and property on his death and she and her husband, Joseph Illingworth lived there for several years. Joseph also owned land in Ossett Town and they lived there later in their lives. This land stood either side of Prospect Road (then known as Back Lane). One parcel of land stood where the Community Centre (2013) now stands and their home stood opposite that adjacent to Illingworth Street which in those days was known by the name *Joseph Illingworth Lane*<sup>67</sup>

**Thomas** lived longer remaining on Storrs hill for the whole of his life. He had seven children and died aged 62, in 1802 and was buried at Horbury. His burial record describes him as Thomas Marsden weaver of Storrs Hill. It appears that he sold some of his land, left to him by his father, to his brother John but much of what he had been left passed on his death to his eldest son, Benjamin (though no Will has been found). Benjamin Marsden married Sarah Marsden, a relation, at Silkstone in 1792 and died in 1812 aged 46. Sarah, his wife, died two years later leaving their eldest daughter Mary

<sup>66</sup> The History of The Rocks – Rock Cottages- Storrs Hill

<sup>67</sup> 1841 Census

Marsden(1793-1822) to bring up her younger siblings at their home, on Storrs Hill, which was located to the rear of where the Tram Sheds would be built about 100 years later. Thomas' great granddaughter, Sarah Ann Marsden and her husband George Mitchell, lived at this family home for a short while but in 1861 they lived, albeit briefly, at Sowood Farm whilst building a new home<sup>68</sup> opposite on land purchased by her father, also Benjamin before his death in 1848. This house, known as Rock Cottage, was built in the 1860's and was rented to Bennett Brook between about 1934 and 1957. The house was demolished shortly afterwards. This building is not to be confused with The Rocks- known in 2013 as Rock Cottages- which still stands in 2013.

**John Marsden** moved away to live at Silkstone, at Toad Hole where he died in 1779. His brother Francis, our main subject in this section because he inherited Sowood Farm, married Hannah Haigh in 1756. John Marsden married her younger sister, Martha Haigh in 1760 at Wakefield. It may have been then that they moved to Toad Hole at Silkstone where John worked as a stone mason. They had four children born between 1762 and 1774 and all were baptised at Silkstone. He lived at one of the two farms which stand there today but he had not left his Ossett roots completely and retained ownership of much of the land left to him by his father in 1742. In his Will he left most of this land to his youngest, only surviving son also called Francis. The Toad Hole Farm occupied by John is close to Oxspring and in 1672 it may have been the home of his great grandfather Francis Marsden before he moved to Middlecliff in nearby Thurlstone and subsequently to Sowood Farm in about 1680.

Whilst the main focus of this section is the Francis Marsden (1731-1761) who inherited Sowood Farm it is important to the history to see how the Marsdens used their land holdings at Sowood and Storrs Hill (they had land between Giggal Hill and Horbury Road too) to farm but also to build homes for their increasingly large families (in spite of so many young deaths).It is also noteworthy at this stage in the history to see that whilst several Marsdens were staying here to farm some, like John of Toad Hole Silkstone, left to seek their fortunes elsewhere. There is only so much land to farm in Sowood and Ossett and it was increasingly inevitable that some Marsdens would need to move on and it was also inevitable, because of the inheritance customs of the time, that many of those who moved on would be the younger children.

Meanwhile, back in Sowood, young Francis married Hannah Haigh in 1756, one of the daughters of Robert and Barbara Haigh (nee Leeke) of Hags Farm Ossett. This farm stood where Hags Hill Farm<sup>69</sup> stands today although the house there now is not the house in which the Haighs once lived. The barn structure however probably dates from that period. The Haighs were well to do with Robert the eldest son of James Haigh who served as Minister of Horbury St Peter's & St Leonard's Church for 41 years 10 months and 4 days from May 1685 until his death in April 1727.

In more ways than one the Haighs were well known to the Marsdens and Reverend James Haigh would have officiated at many Marsden births, marriages and deaths over that period. Robert's mother, Barbara Leeke had an even more impressive pedigree and her family can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when they lived in Halom in Nottinghamshire. They came to Horbury with Sir Gervase Clifton who subsequently became Lord of the Manor of Wakefield and the Leeke's of the time acted as his steward in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The families were great friends and the Leeke's and then the Haighs would become very influential in Horbury and Ossett. In 1672 Robert Leake lived in Horbury Hall and the Hearth Tax of that year records him being charged tax on twelve hearths. His son Gervase, Barbara Leeke's father, lived nearby and paid Hearth Tax on six Hearths. The highest recorded number of hearths in 1672 Ossett was five.

---

<sup>68</sup> This house – known as Rock Cottage (not to be confused with the Rocks & later known as Rock Cottages) -was to become the rented home of Bennett Brook in about 1934

<sup>69</sup> Hags Hill Farm today is a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century house with the remains of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century barn

None of this would be mean much to Francis in the mid 1760's by which time he had buried two children and was the father of three others - Elizabeth, Francis and John. It seems likely that Francis had moved to Sowood in the early/mid 1750's from his home on Ossett Lights or from his step father's home. He may then have lived at Sowood with his wife Hannah and their children may have been born there in the late 1750's and early 1760's.

Francis Marsden was buried at Horbury on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1765 only two days after he signed and sealed his Last Will and Testament suggesting his decline was rapid and his death unexpected. He was 34 years of age and left his 30 year old widow with three children, Elizabeth (aged 7), Francis (aged 3) and John (not yet one year of age).

As best he could in the circumstances he took care of his widow and left annual annuities of £8 to her, during her natural life, to be derived equally from income from his lands at Southowram in the parish of Halifax (left to him by his grand Uncle William in 1757) and Ossett. These were to be paid to her without any restriction imposed in the event of her re-marriage which in the circumstances must have been inevitable. He also left his widow the Tenant Rights he held under the Honourable Sir Charles Matthew Goring and Mr Edward Oates but only for so long as she remained his widow. These tenant rights probably refer to copyhold land in the manor of Wakefield.

His Ossett land, including Sowood, was left to his eldest son Francis who was also required to pay £150 to his sister Elizabeth when he attained the age of 21. The Southowram ownerships were left to his second son John who in similar circumstances was required to pay his sister £200. It was his last Will that his sons and daughter be educated from the income from his estates and he named his sons and daughter as Executors of his Will. Importantly he added *.....And it is my Will & mind that my said Wife & Children may live together in my present Dwelling house during my said children's respective Minorities in Case my said wife so long continues my Widow and No Longer*

Francis named his wife, his father in law (Robert Haigh), Thomas Dews and his brother John Marsden (by now living in Silkstone) as Guardians and Trustees for his children during their minorities. He signed his Will "Francis Marsdin" and it was witnessed by Joshua Earnshaw, John Ellison and Thomas Oates. He left an inventory with his Will which declared the value of his net estate at £200. The Inventory was appraised by Joshua Haigh, John Clark jnr, Benjamin Hepworth and Joshua Illingworth (who made his mark). Probate was granted to his Trustees on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1765 when Hannah signed her own name as "Hannah Mirsdin". Thomas Dews Robert Haigh and John Marsdin also signed their names to the probate papers.

There are some references in the Will and Inventory which appear to differ to those made by his grandfather in his Will of 1735. It cannot be certain that this is an inventory referring to Sowood Farm though, of course, it is a record of Francis' estate and chattels. Francis is also described as a Yeoman and "of Ossett" which does not make clear his abode in the parish which could have been Sowood, Ossett Lights (where he was probably born) or his stepfather's home. In these circumstances it is possible that between his father's death in 1742 and 1765 Sowood Farm was worked by one or more of his Marsden Uncles.

Wherever he was living the Inventory provides information regarding the extent of his farming which would include land at Sowood Farm which he had inherited from his father in 1742. At the time of his death in 1765 Francis was working 10 acres of oats and barley, 17 acres of wheat and 3 acres of beans. He would probably also have one third of his holding as fallow land. In addition he has 53 sheep, 2 cows, 6 horses for which he would require pasture. This may require in the region of 60 acres or so which is likely to be slightly less than the 80-90 acres worked by his grandfather in 1735.

Out of duty or necessity, Hannah remained a widow and brought up her children in the family home in accordance with Francis' Will. She did however marry again but not until December 1784 by which time she was almost 50 years of age. Her second marriage was to family friend William Illingworth.

Francis left his Southowram estates to his youngest son, John (1764-1797) and his Sowood and other Ossett real estate to his eldest son Francis Marsden (1762-1792).

**Francis Marsden (1762-1792) son of Francis & great great grandson of Francis (1651-1718)**

Francis Marsden was baptised at Dewsbury All Saints Parish Church on 27 March 1762 so becoming the first Marsden of this line not to be baptised at Horbury or Penistone. His baptism at somewhere other than Horbury is further evidence of the possibility that his father did not live at Sowood Farm at the time of his death in 1765. Francis was also married, to Elizabeth Parson, at the same Church on 28 January 1790. He died, aged 29, in January 1792 without issue.

There is doubt whether Francis was born at Sowood and the date he may have moved to Sowood Farm is uncertain. In 1775 his widowed mother Hannah was recorded as shown below

Land Description	Acres	Roods	Perches	Value (£ s d)
Widow Marsden Having and to have	1	1	1	10
Little Ox Close	3	2	10	16 9
Great Ox Close & Spring	1	3	31	26 10
Round Ing	1	2	31	21 6
Croft	1	2	11	5 6
Mapplewell Close	1	3	10	28 1
Spring	1	2	1	2
				11 8
Widow Marsden Joseph Glover Co. Home	1	1	1	15
Garden	0	3	21	13 1
1 land upper acreage	1	1	5	2 9
1 St. Thomas's Head	1	1	25	12 10
				£ 115 8

**1775 Ossett Valuation showing Widow Marsden's land ownerships in that year**

Widow Marsden was Hannah (nee Haigh) and mother to thirteen year old Francis. The record shows her owning *Little Ox Close*, *Great Ox Close & Spring*, *Round Ing & Croft*. These lands total 13 acres 2 roods 22 perches (approx 13.5 acres) This is the land mentioned in 1676, in John Marsden's Will of 1735 and the closes which are shown on the 1843 Tithe Award map as being part of the Sowood Farmstead. She also appears to own two houses, one of which is rented to Joseph Glover which is probably in Ossett Town. This suggests that she was probably living at Sowood farm by 1775 in which case her young children would also be living at the Farm.

There is no record here of the Ossett Lights dwelling referred to in John Marsden's Will of 1742 which suggests it was either rented or has been sold. The Mapplewell Close land recorded above was left to Hannah by her father Robert Haigh of Hags Farm Ossett who died in 1768. Francis Marsden signed and sealed his Will on 14 January 1792 signing his own name as "Francis Marsdin" It is witnessed by William Illingworth (his mother's second husband), Mary Parsons (sister in law) and James Battye. The Will was proved on 29 February 1792 at Pontefract when Francis is described as being "of Storrs Hill". A contemporary map shows Storrs Hill adjacent to the Farm and at this time it seems likely that this was the "address" for Sowood farm.



Oddly it has not been possible to locate a burial record for Francis in Horbury or Dewsbury but it is certain that he died between 14 January 1792 and 29 February 1792. At his death Francis has no children from his January 1790 marriage to Elizabeth Parsons but he makes provision in his Will in the event that his wife is with child

Francis left all of his Personal and Real Estate to ..... *such child or children (if any) as my Dear Wife Elizabeth shall be pregnant with at the time of my Decease....* and he entrusts the Tuition and Guardianship of any such children to her. Elizabeth was not pregnant and in these circumstances the Will specifies that *Mapplewell otherwise Lights Close* be devised to his sister Elizabeth and the remainder of his Real Estate is left to his younger brother John. His widow is left an annual annuity of £10 during the term of her natural life to be paid shortly *after my said Brother John Marsdin shall enter to my said real and Personal Estate ...* and Elizabeth is to be paid £300 by John twelve months after he takes possession of Francis' Personal and Real Estate in lieu of her dower. He also leaves £10 to his aunt Martha Marsden.



A stone marks the *Spring* in Ox Close Sowood Farm.

Aunt Martha Marsden— nee Haigh – was the wife of John Marsden of Toad Hole Silkstone. This John Marsden had died in 1779 but had been appointed as a Guardian of Francis and his siblings on their father's death in 1765. Even though these Marsdens lived some distance away at Silkstone it is clear they were still close family members. Martha is also sister of Francis' mother Hannah (nee Haigh).

Francis also left his wife Elizabeth *a feather bed and bedding, a pair of chest of drawers, a seeing glass, bed linen, table linen, a set of china, two silver table spoons, six tea spoons, tea tongs, tea table and two tea boards and some tumbler and wine glasses which she bought at the time of our marriage.* If she was pregnant his wife Elizabeth was to be appointed sole Executrix and John added *that I desire that my good friend Mr Joseph Thornes...be aiding and assisting to my said wife in due execution of this my Will*

What followed must have been difficult for Elizabeth for she had to forswear that she was not pregnant and consequently not entitled to act as Executrix. Instead this responsibility fell to his brother John Marsden of Southowram in the Parish of Halifax, Worsted Manufacturer. This was sworn before John Taylor, Surrogate at Horbury Grange on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1792. Probate was granted at Pontefract eight days later. In lieu of an Inventory John Marsdin certified that Francis' assets were valued at less than £100. In his Will, Francis also includes references to surrendering lands with a straw to the Lord of the Manor and this refers to those lands in his occupation which would be copyhold for the Manor.

In January 1792, at the age of 29, Francis Marsden died without issue. His 27 year old brother John, the second son, returned from his Southowram estates to run the Ossett holdings including Sowood Farm.



### **John Marsden (1764-1797) son of Francis and great great grandson of Francis (1651-1718)**

John Marsden was baptised at Dewsbury All Saints Church on 27 September 1764. He was the fourth child of five and by the age of 27 four of his siblings had died. His father, Francis Marsden (1731-1765) died when John was a babe in arms and he would have few, if any, memories of their time together. In accordance with his father's last Will his mother, Hannah, brought up John and his elder siblings Elizabeth and Francis. Contrary to the usual custom in such circumstances she had not remarried until the children reached, or perhaps almost, reached their age of majority. Widow Marsden married William Illingworth in 1784. Both of Hannah's husbands were great grandchildren of Francis Marsden (1651-1718)

John had inherited lands at Southowram from his father whilst his elder brother, Francis, inherited the Ossett estates including Sowood Farm. In 1792 he is described as Worsted Manufacturer of Southowram but his brother's death hastened his journey back to Ossett where he was required to run the family estates and farm. His life would have been in turmoil. Aged only 27 he had lost his 29 year old brother and he was uncertain as to his own future for the Will required different things of him depending on whether his brother's wife, Elizabeth, was pregnant.

Officially this was not known until probate was granted a month later when records make clear that Elizabeth was not with child and consequently John inherited the Ossett estates and Sowood Farm. It is not clear if Elizabeth married again, but it seems likely, or how long she remained at Sowood after the death of Francis. She had been handsomely provided for by Francis with an annuity and £300 in lieu of her dower so in that sense she was not tied to Sowood. The payment of the dower was however a very significant commitment for John to fulfill and when he died six years later in 1798 his total estate was worth only £244.

It is probable that John lived at Sowood between 1792 and his early death in December 1797 when like his brother before him he is described as being of Storrs Hill. John Marsden, farmer, wrote, dated, signed and sealed his Will on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1797 and was buried at Horbury on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1797. Like his brother it seems he was taken quickly and his death was unexpected. He was a bachelor without issue.

After the usual preamble in the Will regarding his surrender of his copyhold estates into the hands of the Lord of Manor of Wakefield he left to his eldest, and only surviving, sibling Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) all his copyhold and freehold Southowram messuages, cottages, dwellinghouse or tenements, crofts, closes, lands, grounds and premises (now in the possession of William Barber<sup>70</sup>). The residue and remainder of his real estate is left to his mother Hannah Illingworth (nee Marsden who married again in 1784) for life.

After Hannah's death (in 1808) the Ossett lands, including Sowood Farm, were also to pass to his sister Elizabeth, wife of John Nettleton (who she married in Dewsbury in December 1783) for her life. Upon her death the Ossett estates were devised to all his nephews and nieces, the sons and daughters of Elizabeth (1757-1843) and John Nettleton (1744-1823). The witnesses to his Will were James Battye, Joseph Illingworth (who had married John's cousin, Mary Marsden and lived at The Rocks, Storrs Hill) and Mary Hutchinson.

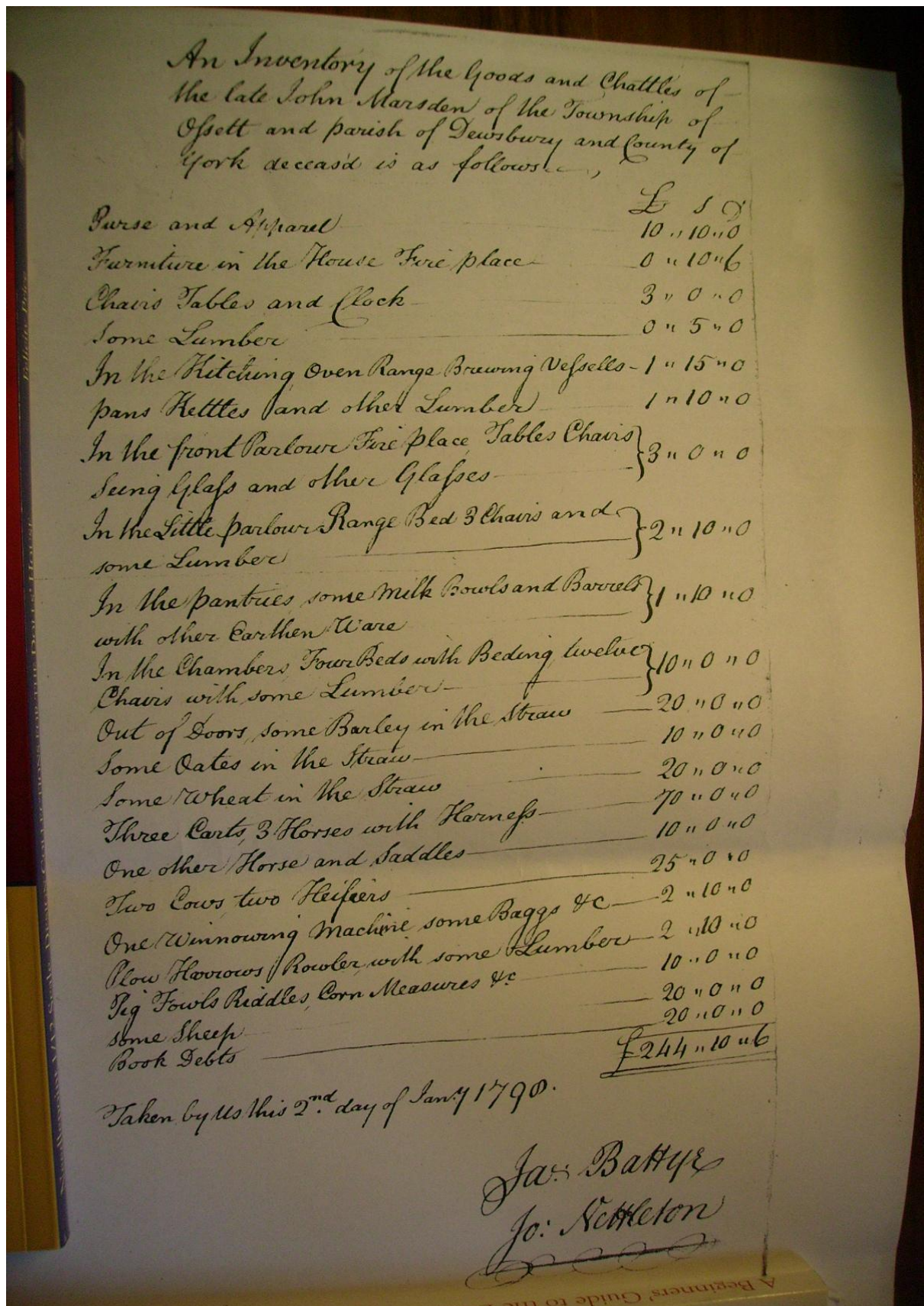
His executors were William Illingworth (his stepfather) and John Nettleton (his brother in law) and they were sworn before John Taylor: Surrogate at Horbury Grange on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1798. William Illingworth was described at this probate as John's "father in law" a term often used then to also denote a man who had married the Testator's widowed mother.

For more than 120 years the Marsden name had appeared on Sowood Farm records. John's name was there for the shortest period of time and it was to be the last. As a consequence of Elizabeth Marsden's marriage to John Nettleton the ownership passed to the Nettleton family in 1798. Like the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was to be an uncertain time at Sowood Farm, albeit for entirely different reasons.

---

<sup>70</sup> In 1836 William Barker issued Chancery Court proceedings against the Nettleton family.

John's Will included an Inventory almost certainly taken at Sowood Farm in January 1798.



Inventory from the Will of John Marsden (1764-1797)



A Wakefield Court Roll of 1797<sup>71</sup> records that on 28 November 1797 John Marsden *surrendered all his customary or copyhold lands which are compounded for and to the use of such person or persons and for such use and purposes as John Marsden shall in and by his Will devise.....* This Entry in the Rolls informs the reader that the copyhold land in question is now compounded and it was this land and John's freehold land which was left to his sister Elizabeth Nettleton.

John Marsden's death brought to an end the Marsden ownership of Sowood Farm. It was early 1798 when Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) inherited the Farm but before recording the events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it may be worthwhile to examine the extent of the Sowood farm holding.

From the 1670's the Farm has been defined by the land, about 15 acres, adjacent to the Farmhouse as it can be seen today. This land was however always supplemented by additional land, often copyhold or rented, mainly situated on Storrs Hill but also elsewhere in Ossett and at Horbury Westfield and at Healey. In 1676 Francis Marsden acquired the copyhold interest in the Farm and 29 acres and by 1709 he was also renting land on Storrs Hill from the Beatsons. Excluding any other land he may have been renting at that time this would have added to at least 60 acres. In 1735 John Marsden's Will suggests a farm holding of approximately 80-90 acres whilst in 1765 the holding appears slightly smaller but still in the region of 60 acres. A 1797 Inventory was also taken but this tells us little about the acreage because it was taken in January when the crops were in. It does however refer to oats, wheat, barley and hay. Cattle, horses and sheep are also on the farm.

Even earlier than the 1680's there is evidence that the Farm was run as a mixed farm with crops of wheat, barley, oats, beans and peas but with livestock too including sheep, cows hens ducks geese and working horses.

An examination of the 1775 Ossett Valuation<sup>72</sup> record, the Horbury Tithe records of 1775 and 1777 tell something more the extent of the total acreage worked from Sowood Farm around this time.

	Survey			Value p. acre.			Total		
	A	R	P	£	s	d	£	s	d
M <sup>r</sup> Edw. Oates Widow Marsden Co <sup>r</sup>									
Rough Close.	3	1	34	"	11	"	1	18	1
Cinderhill Close.	1	2	31	"	15	"	3	10	3
Brigg Close.	1	0	34	"	15	"	3	3	2
Brown Close.	5	0	32	"	10	6	2	11	1
Great Close.	1	3	20	"	12	6	3		10
Marchhill Close.	3	0	20	"	12	"	1	17	6
Another Rough Close.	3	"	"	"	10	6	1	11	6
							17	15	8

**1775 Ossett Valuation Widow Marsden renting 28acres 2 roods 15perch from Edward Oates**

The land rented by Widow Marsden ( nee Haigh - the widow of John Marsden 1731-1765) from Edward Oates (son of William Oates who was Lord of the manor of South wood green in 1709<sup>73</sup>) was mainly situated between Storrs Hill Road and Healey Road close to the River Calder. Some was on Storrs Hill but much of the lower land (Rough Closes & Cinderhill Close) would, by the 1840's, be crossed by the Manchester and Leeds Railway.

<sup>71</sup> Wakefield Court Roll 1797 Yorkshire Archaeological Society reference MD 225/1/526 (47)

<sup>72</sup> The John Goodchild Collection West Yorkshire Archives Service Newstead Road Wakefield

<sup>73</sup> Wakefield Manor Book 1709

The Horbury Tithe Award 1775 is shown below and records Mrs Marsden renting about 26 acres – similar in total to the above. This may not be the same Mrs Marsden as the Widow Marsden above but the names of the fields being rented are in many cases the same but of slightly different measurement. A Wakefield Manor Estate map of 1790 shows the area in which these closes are located as “*These lands are assessed for both townships of Horbury and Ossett*” If this was also the case in 1775 then this would explain why the same lands are recorded in both Ossett and Horbury at that time. It does not however explain why the measurements are different – unless different assessors were employed by each township. The 1775 Horbury acreage totals to about 26 acres which is similar to the total Widow Marsden is renting in Ossett from Edward Oates.

On the assumption that these are the same areas Mrs, or Widow, Marsden is occupying about 28 acres of rented land and will also be working about 15 acres at Sowood farm itself and 5 acres at Maplewell Close (left to her by her father Robert Haigh in 1768). In total this amounts to about 50 acres in 1775.

The Horbury Tithe Award 1775 (& 1777)<sup>74</sup> records Mrs Marsden occupying the land shown below

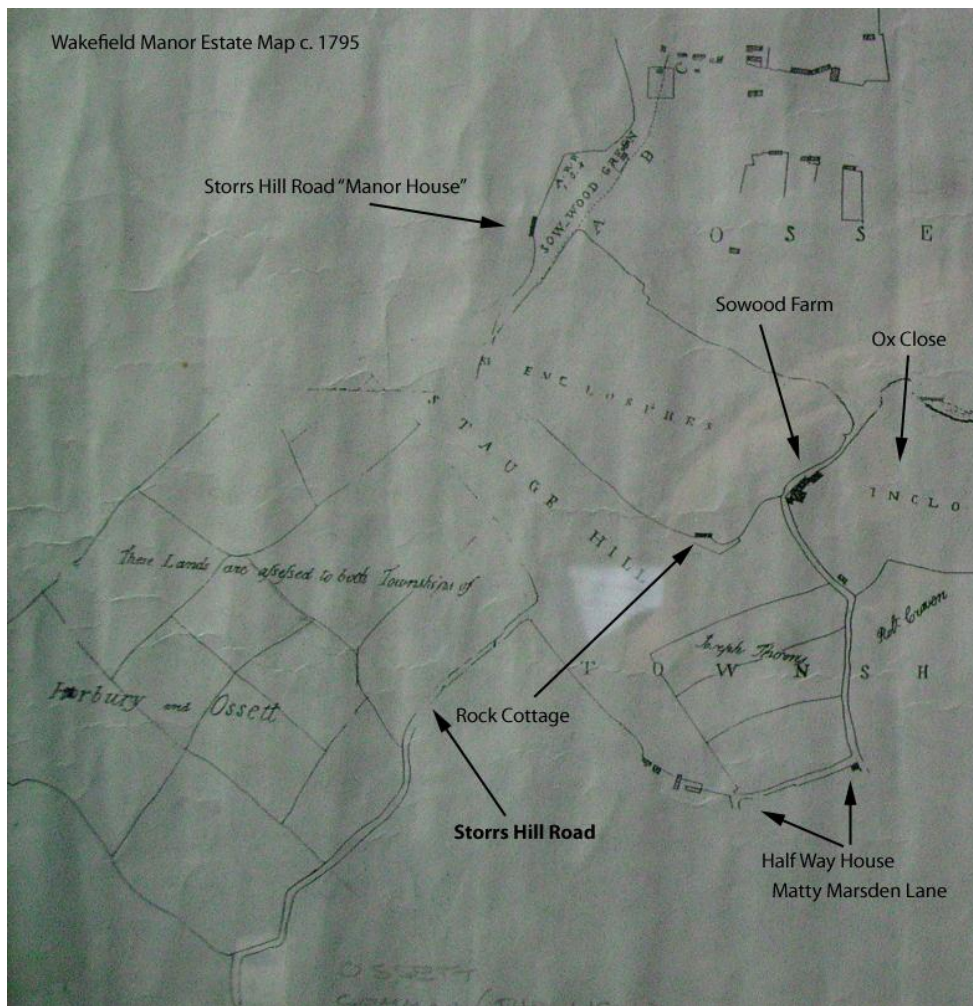
<u>MARSDEN MRS.</u>												
Sinder Hill Close				4	0	0	Os & Bs.		0	18	0	
Speight Close				4	0	0	Pasture					
Brig Close				4	0	0	Wheat		1	6	0	
Lane Close				3	0	0	Barley		0	19	6	
Broom Close	3	2	0.	1	1	0	Wheat		0	8	1½	
				2	1	0	Pasture					
Dam Flatt				2	2	0	Glover		0	1	8	
Storge Hill Close												
	4	0	0.	2	2	0	Fallow					
				1	2	0	Pease		0	6	9	
										4	0	0½

The Horbury Tithe Award also records land use with oats, beans, wheat, barley, clover and peas being grown with some fields being left fallow and others used for pasture.

The Poor Law Assessment Book 1795 records Mr Jno Marsden paying 3s poor rate for his land which at that time would be approximately 15 acres at Sowood Farm. In addition he is paying almost 9s poor rate for land he is renting from Mr Oates which, on this basis, equates to 45 acres. In total this suggests about 60 acres being worked by John Marsden in 1795.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century records suggest, therefore, that the total acreage worked from Sowood Farm during that period varied between about 60 and 80/90 acres. In all of the years examined (1735, 1765, 1775, 1795 and 1797) the land use has been mixed arable (cropping oats, wheat, barley, peas & beans) and livestock (mainly sheep but also cattle) and working horses have been kept during the whole of this period.

<sup>74</sup> Ken Bartlett: Wakefield and Horbury



**Wakefield Manor Estate Map c. 1790-1795**

The above representation shows the layout of land and properties in the late 18th Century:

**Sowood Farm [1689]** and adjacent Ox Close in the possession of the Marsdens since 1676

**The Rocks (Rock Cottage in the above)** home to William Marsden by 1777 and built by him in about 1763

**Half Way House** Horbury possibly home to Joseph Marsden by 1757

**Matty Marsden Lane** probably named after Martha (Matty) daughter in law of Joseph Marsden. Martha's first daughter was also called Martha Marsden.

**Storrs Hill Road Manor House [1684]** demolished in 1958/59<sup>75</sup>

*Note Stauge Hill* [Storrs Hill] between enclosures to its north, south and east. Much of Storrs Hill was occupied and farmed by the Marsden family in the 1700's. All were descendents of Francis (1651-1718) the builder of Sowood Far

<sup>75</sup> See the companion history *The Manor of South Wood Green* A collection of historical notes



## THE NETTLETONS & JOHN SCHOLEFIELD 1798-1903

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century began as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century ended with a Nettleton in ownership of Sowood Farm. In 1783 Elizabeth Marsden (1757-1843) married John Nettleton (1744-1823), from a family with a long local pedigree. In 1797 Elizabeth had inherited land at Southowram in the parish of Halifax from her younger brother John Marsden (1764-1797); land which had been left to her father, Francis Marsden (1731-1765) by her great grand uncle William Marsden (1689-1757) on his death 40 years earlier in 1757.

She also inherited Sowood Farm and other Ossett land from her brother John in 1797 when it was left to her as the sole survivor, and eldest child, of five children. However in the case of Sowood and the Ossett estates she only had the right to these estates during her lifetime and on her decease the Ossett real estate was to be passed on to her children. This decision, taken by John on his death bed in late 1797, was to be the beginning of the end of family ownership of Sowood until 150 years later in 1948 when Benton Brook purchased Sowood Farm.

Elizabeth had done rather well out of Sowood Farm and the other Marsden land holdings even before she became owner. In 1765 her father left the Southowram lands to John and the Ossett ownerships to Francis but required them to pay £200 and £150 respectively to Elizabeth on them reaching the age of 21. This would be in about 1783, the year she married John Nettleton. In 1792 her brother Francis Marsden (1762-1792) died and left her a five acre close of land called Mapplewell or Lights Close. For John Nettleton, a "clothier and bachelor" at the time of his 1783 marriage, Elizabeth Marsden must have been quite a catch.

It was probably a necessity that Elizabeth and 53 year old John Nettleton moved to Sowood Farm as soon as possible after her brother John's death and it appears this was the case. For Elizabeth it would be a return to the home she left when she married John Nettleton in 1783. By 1798<sup>76</sup> it appears that Jno.<sup>77</sup> Nettleton had begun farming at Sowood and in 1807 he is described as a "husbandman". His brother and father, both called Joseph are recorded in the same year as *Gent* and *Yeoman*, providing evidence that John, too, came from a wealthy background.

Despite the Ossett estates, including Sowood Farm, being left to Elizabeth it is her husband John Nettleton's name that appears in the property records of the time. The property rights of women during most of the nineteenth century were dependent upon their marital status. Once women married, their property rights were governed by English common law, which required that the property women took into a marriage, or acquired subsequently, be legally absorbed by their husbands. Furthermore, married women could not make wills or dispose of any property without their husband's consent.

---

<sup>76</sup> The 1798 Land Tax Redemption records John Nettleton in this location whereas the 1795 Poor Law Assessment record has him elsewhere. See 1798 Land Tax Redemption Certificate overleaf

<sup>77</sup> Jno. was often used to denote a father called John where he has a son of the same name. John and Elizabeth had their second son, John, in 1787



Also Certificate of a Contract dated the thirty first day of May 1799  
 Whereby John Calverley Esquire Mayor of the Borough of Leeds in  
 the West Riding of the County of York and David Swale Esquire two  
 of the Commissioners appointed for the purposes of the said acts for the  
 West Riding of the County of York Certified That they had Contracted  
 with M<sup>r</sup> John Nettleton for the Redemption by him of one Pound  
 two Shillings and three pence Land Tax being the Land Tax  
 charged upon The Estates of the said M<sup>r</sup> John Nettleton hereafter  
 mentioned (that is to say) Upon the Messuage with its Appurtenances  
 and Closes containing together twenty five Acres of Land in the Occupation  
 of the owner A Messuage with the appurtenances and a Close  
 containing two roods of Land in the Occupation of Edmund Scott  
 a Dwelling house with the Appurtenances and two Crofts containing  
 together two Acres of Land in the Occupation of Enock Dewar and  
 Three Cottages in the Occupation of the owner and Thomas Dewar  
 and A Mesuage situate in the Township of Spill and Gawthorpe  
 in the said Riding Assessed in the Assessment for 1798 thus. John  
 Nettleton (proprietor) himself (occupier) £1.3 Sum Assessed and  
 also upon the Cottage with an allotment of Land and other  
 appurtenances in the Township of Alverthorpe & Thornes in the  
 said Riding in the Occupation of Thomas Broadhead as Tenant  
 to M<sup>r</sup> John Nettleton the owner assessed in the Assessment for  
 1798 thus John Nettleton (proprietor) John Broadhead occupier  
 1<sup>s</sup> Sum assessed making together the Amount of one Pound two  
 Shillings and three pence

### 1798 Land Tax Redemption Certificate for John Nettleton

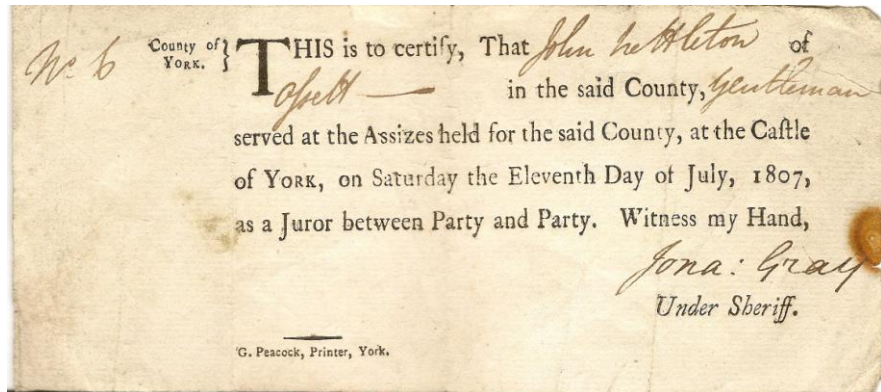
This certificate shows John Nettleton land ownerships in 1798. His messuage with 25 acres is Sowood with its adjacent land and Mapplewell Close makes up the majority of this and is in his occupation. Also mentioned is a messuage and 2 roods (half an acre) occupied by Edmund Scott. In 1813<sup>78</sup> Jos. Scott is occupying 1 rood & 3 perches which is only marginally smaller than the 1798 lot but could be the same location. There is no obvious record of this piece of land during the Marsden years and John Nettleton may have sold this to Scott. An examination of the half acre plot, at the Horbury end of Manor Lane, adjacent to the ancient Leake's Stile<sup>79</sup> on the footpath from Horbury to Ossett shows its boundaries make it a natural part of Ox Close. John Nettleton also has land elsewhere which he may have had before his marriage. This appears to be located in the Ossett Low Common area but he also has land holdings in Alverthorpe with Thornes

<sup>78</sup> The Ossett Inclosure Order Map 1813

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*



These land ownerships put John Nettleton in the position of being eligible for jury service and on 11 July 1807 he was called to serve at York<sup>80</sup>. From 1696, rural vestries and urban corporations had to send to the Clerk of the Peace for their county, lists of the people within their jurisdictions



who were eligible for jury service. These were men between the ages of 21 and 70 who owned freeholds worth at least 40 shillings per year. They were listed under the parishes in which they lived, but if their qualifying property was in another parish this was sometimes also stated. The annual value of their freeholds might be noted too, together with the owner's rank or occupation.

In 1809 the Ossett Inclosure Act began its implementation stage and the following notice is one of the earliest references (excluding 1676) to "Sowood House" and Sowood House Road

*And I do hereby give NOTICE,*  
That I have, in addition to the several Roads by me set out some time ago, upon, over and across the Lands and Grounds by the said first-mentioned Statute directed to be divided and inclosed, set out and appointed the several public Pack and Drift Ways, Private Carriage Roads, or Occupation Roads, and Public Footways hereinafter mentioned, that is to say,  
SOWOOD HOUSE ROAD—One Public Pack and Drift Way, and Footway, and Private Carriage Road, or Occupation Road, of the Width of Twenty Feet, which I call by the Name of *Sowood House Road*, branching out of the Horbury Road on Ossett Middle Common, and extending in an Eastwardly, and then in a Southwardly Direction to the Horbury Bridle Road, near to the Lane leading towards Sowood-House.

Leeds Mercury 17 June 1809

The 1813 Ossett Inclosure Map records John Nettleton in possession of Sowood Farm and the 1821 Ossett Census records a 77 year old John Nettleton and 64 year old Elizabeth Nettleton living at dwelling number 170<sup>81</sup> with a 30 year old un-named male Nettleton, possibly their son Francis. Next door at dwelling 170a are two Nettleton children, John jnr and Hannah aged 8 and 6 respectively who are children of Thomas Nettleton described on his children's birth registrations as a farmer. Thomas appears to have died in 1816. Living in the same household as the children is a 20 year old servant,

<sup>80</sup> Notice of Jury service courtesy of Ruth Nettleton

<sup>81</sup> The 1821 Ossett Census does not cite addresses but only a number for each dwelling recorded. From other records and individuals however it is clear that this is Sowood Farm.

Amelia Illingworth. It is almost certain that 77 year old John Nettleton would need help on the farm and perhaps this is their farmer son Thomas' reason for being there.

It appears that the Farm now has (at least) two dwellings although it could be the farmhouse which had been sub-divided (later records show that it had been divided at some time earlier) or it could be a farm building conversion to a dwelling or another dwelling may have been built within the curtilage of the Farm. Also adjacent on the 1821 Census is number 171 which houses three Westermans and number 173 which is home to John and Charlotte Marsden. These properties too may be part of the farm. During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there are signs of additional dwelling being established at the farm and it is thought that some of these may be conversions of farm buildings.

This seems to be a rather sad time too in the history of the Farm. An aged farmer with most of his children making their way in the world in other types of work suggests a sense of neglect at the Farm in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. As John Nettleton ages, the work becomes more difficult, farm buildings are converted to dwellings, and perhaps not very well, to secure a steady and easier source of income. It seems unlikely that there would be much investment either since it is almost inevitable that the farmstead would be sold when Elizabeth dies so that their children can receive their fortunes promised by their Uncle John Marsden in 1798; a man most of them never knew. The early 1800's must have been a time of decline for Sowood Farm.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1815 John Nettleton is 71 years of age when most men, if they survive that long in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, are contemplating a less vigorous time of life. John Nettleton of Storge Hill, farmer, however is recorded<sup>82</sup> purchasing 5 acres of meadow arable and pasture land on Storge Hill from his friend, surgeon John Greenwood of Ravens Lodge, Dewsbury. This is land which was part of Upper Field, now divided into two and known as Storge Hill Close (there were many closes known by this name) and most recently was in the occupation of John Nettleton.

In 17 November 1815 John Nettleton sells or mortgages the same land to **William Barber** of Southowram. Was John able to buy low and sell high? The Memorials of the Deeds rarely specify the price paid and sometimes the full nature of the transaction is unclear and it is possible that this was simply a mortgage. In either case this transaction was to come back to haunt John's executors in 1836 thirteen years after his death. It is also worth noting that William Barber was the man occupying the Marsden land in Southowram which was left by Francis Marsden to his sister Elizabeth Nettleton at his death in 1792.

But John Nettleton's son, also John Nettleton (1787-1867) had also been paying a visit to the Solicitor. In **1814** *John Nettleton Cardmaker of Alverthorpe and one of the sons of John Nettleton the elder of Storrs Hill, farmer and one of the nephews and devisees of Francis Marsden* entered into a Deed with John Scholefield Horbury Attorney, man of property and a major land owner in Horbury and Ossett *concerning a **one seventh part** of land..... now in the tenure of John Nettleton the elder*. The land is specified in the memorial of Deed<sup>83</sup> as Mapplewell otherwise Lights Close (given to Elizabeth by her brother Francis in 1792) and all the estates, including Sowood Farm, given to Elizabeth by her brother John in 1797, for life and **in trust for her children on her death**.

John Nettleton junior's deal with John Scholefield was either the sale of his interest in this land or an advance to him by John Scholefield which was secured against the property, including Sowood Farm, to which he was entitled to a part (one seventh) on his mother's death. He was one of seven surviving children in 1814 – hence the one seventh referred to above. Perhaps John Nettleton junior had pressing matters and could not await for his mother's death (which didn't happen until 29 years later in 1843).

Leaving aside the matter of the Deed itself the content confirms that, in 1814, the 70 year old John Nettleton senior of *Storrs Hill* was farming the land which was included in this transaction. Neither does the Deed refer to the farmstead as Sowood Farm but it is known that in 1813<sup>84</sup> the road between Manor Road (then Middle Common Road) and Horbury Road (then Horbury Bridle Road) was known

---

<sup>82</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Deeds Registry Deed of 1815 reference GH 317 359 & GH 318 360

<sup>83</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Deeds Registry Deed of 1814 reference FY 621 763. The Deed does not specify if the arrangement was a sale or security for an advance.

<sup>84</sup> Ossett Inclosure Order

as Sowood House Road. Sowood House was the name given to Sowood Farm in the 1850 O.S map of Ossett and is shown below in an 1823 notice for letting the farm on John Nettleton senior's death.

On **22 February 1823** John Nettleton junior '*late of Alverthorpe now of Ossett*' of the first part and John Nettleton the Elder, farmer of Storrs Hill of the second part enter another agreement<sup>85</sup> with John Scholefield, Horbury Attorney at Law of the third part....."*concerning all that 1/7<sup>th</sup> part of that messuage barns stables folds shops and other outbuildings being at Storrs Hill and all those several closes of land, arable or pasture being near the buildings and known as Calf Croft, the Ing, Ox Closes and Mapplewell Close containing 25 acres and now or late in the possession of John Nettleton the Elder....* The agreement goes on to include land and cottages at Ossett Light Side left to John Nettleton the elder by Stephen Foster together with cottages nearby recently built by John Nettleton the elder. Once again the Memorial of the Deed gives no information about the substance of the agreement but the juxtaposition of the Nettletons and Scholefield names in the Deed respectively as the first and second parties (Nettletons) to the agreement with Scholefield as the third party confirms that something is passing from the Nettletons to Scholefield. This is either the sale of the land and buildings or much more likely it is the security of the land and buildings offered to Scholefield in exchange for funds. Was this in some way to extinguish the 1814 Deed? Whatever it was that was happening appears to have remained unsettled or unresolved until 1903.

But what of the rest of the family, the other six surviving children who owned the right to inherit the remaining six/sevenths of the estates on their mother, Elizabeth Nettleton's, death? It seems the surviving children (Thomas had died at a young age in 1816)<sup>86</sup> entered a similar transaction with John Scholefield to the one agreed by John Nettleton junior in 1814.

This was a Deed<sup>87</sup> dated **4<sup>th</sup> April 1823** and John Nettleton junior<sup>88</sup> of the *first part* was enjoined with Joseph Brook of Gawthorpe, farmer, and Elizabeth (nee Nettleton) his wife of the *second part*, Francis Nettleton, Clothier of Ossett of the *third part*, Joseph Nettleton, Butcher of Ossett, of the *fourth part*, Percival Terry of Gawthorpe, Butcher and his wife Mary (nee Nettleton) of the *fifth part*, Robert Nettleton of Chapel Fold Birstall, Clothier, of the *sixth part*. The memorial of the Deed uses the same words as those included in the 1814 Deed related above. This was either a sale of their interests to John Scholefield or an advance by him to the other children secured against their shares of Sowood.

John Nettleton senior wrote his Will on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1822, a codicil on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1823 and he was buried at Dewsbury All Saints Parish Church on 20 October 1823. It had been a difficult and busy few years with his family and solicitors. It was the end of all this for him but not for the rest of his family.

John Nettleton's Will left land and property to his children and grandchildren. Even though in 1798 John Marsden had left Sowood Farm and land to his sister Elizabeth Nettleton for her life and then to her children, common law of the time meant that her husband was the official owner. He could not however do anything other than comply with John Marsden's wishes and since his wife was still alive his Will is silent on the issue of Sowood Farm. His Will left his other land and property to his sons and daughters and grandchildren He also left them his nine sittings in Ossett church and one sitting in Dewsbury Parish church. It may be significant that his eldest son, John Nettleton (1787-1867) is not named as an executor.

His Codicil is more interesting although no more enlightening as to what was going on between the family and John Scholefield and it was this "going on" which affected the ownership of Sowood Farm. The Codicil refers to.... *And whereas I have joined my said son John Nettleton along with his brother*

---

<sup>85</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Deeds Registry Deed of 1823 HR 529 492

<sup>86</sup> Admon Sept 1816 Thomas Nettleton Dewsbury

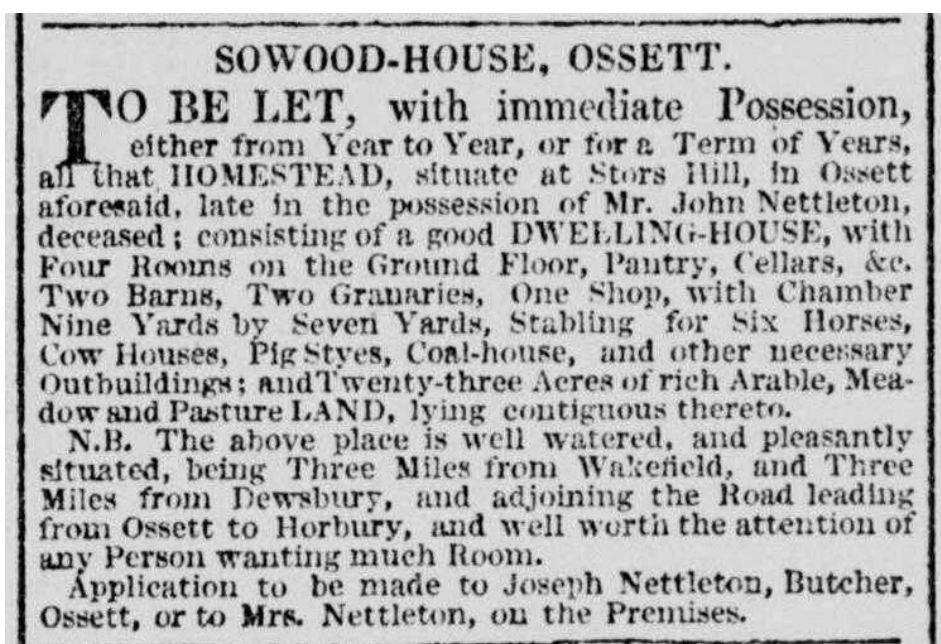
<sup>87</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Deeds Registry Deed of 1823 reference HT 223 209

<sup>88</sup> John Nettleton junior was enjoined with the others because his 1814 transaction was for 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the estate. His brother's death in 1816 entitled him to a larger 1/6<sup>th</sup> share.

*Francis Nettleton in one bond or obligation bearing date the twenty second of February last past (ie 1823)<sup>89</sup> in the **penal sum of four hundred and forty pounds conditioned for the payment of the sum of two hundred and twenty pounds and Interest to John Scholefield of Horbury Gentleman at the day and time therein mentioned and have for better securing the same have mortgaged my estates at Ossett Lights Side in Ossett aforesaid. Now my Will and mind is and I do hereby charge and make liable all the estates and effects whether real or personal which I have so given or bequeathed to him my son John Nettleton in and by my said Will to and with the payment of the said sum of two hundred and twenty pounds and all growing interest and such part or parts thereof as my Executors...shall ...hereafter be called upon to pay and discharge.***

There is a sense here that John Nettleton the elder is not pleased with John Nettleton the younger. The Ossett Light Side estates have been mortgaged to pay John Scholefield his dues (£220 - presumably the sum advanced to John Nettleton in 1814) at some unknown future date. It is to be the responsibility of John junior and (for some unknown reason) his brother Francis to fund this payment. The suggestion is that failure to do so will require the two of them to forfeit £440, which will presumably be paid by them to John Nettleton's Executors whilst John Scholefield will become owner of Sowood Farm as mortgagee in possession. It seems that this is precisely what happened as Sowood Farm subsequently became the property of John Scholefield's descendents –albeit some 80 years later. It also appears that the 1814 and 1823 Nettleton/Scholefield Agreements were to delay the settlement of future Nettleton estates and that it was 1903 before all these issues, whatever they were, were finally settled.

John Nettleton the elder was buried at Dewsbury All Saints Parish Church on 20 October 1823 and the following notice appeared in the The Leeds Mercury on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1823



**SOWOOD-HOUSE, OSSETT.**  
**T**O BE LET, with immediate Possession,  
either from Year to Year, or for a Term of Years,  
all that HOMESTEAD, situate at Stors Hill, in Ossett  
aforesaid, late in the possession of Mr. John Nettleton,  
deceased; consisting of a good DWELLING-HOUSE, with  
Four Rooms on the Ground Floor, Pantry, Cellars, &c.  
Two Barns, Two Granaries, One Shop, with Chamber  
Nine Yards by Seven Yards, Stabling for Six Horses,  
Cow Houses, Pig Styes, Coal-house, and other necessary  
Outbuildings; and Twenty-three Acres of rich Arable, Mea-  
dow and Pasture LAND, lying contiguous thereto.  
N.B. The above place is well watered, and pleasantly  
situated, being Three Miles from Wakefield, and Three  
Miles from Dewsbury, and adjoining the Road leading  
from Ossett to Horbury, and well worth the attention of  
any Person wanting much Room.  
Application to be made to Joseph Nettleton, Butcher,  
Ossett, or to Mrs. Nettleton, on the Premises.

The Notice records the name of the farmstead as Sowood House, specifies the configuration and the location – as it had been described for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century- at *Stors Hill*. The acreage is shown as 23 acres whereas in 1823 it is shown as 25 acres.

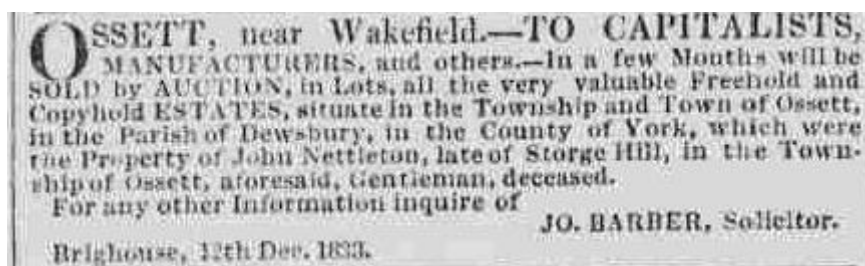
---

<sup>89</sup> The only Memorial of Deed of this date is HR 529 492 referred to above but there is no reference there to Francis Nettleton or of any date and time by which any payment is to be made to John Scholefield.

John Nettleton's Executors were his son Joseph Nettleton and son in law Joseph Brook. The witnesses to the Will were William Bradley, George Boocock and John Sanderson Archer. His witnesses to his codicil were John Marsden<sup>90</sup>, William Illingworth and Henry Jackson. More will be heard of these individuals some thirteen years later in 1836. Interestingly John Nettleton did not name his eldest son, John, as one of his executors. His Will was "passed" on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1824.

The Land Tax records for 1823 show that John Nettleton was paying 17s 6d annual tax and in 1824 - 1827 Widow Nettleton is paying the same sum. This is the first and last time she appears as owner or occupier of the farm which was left to *her* in 1798. In various property records the name on the account now becomes John Nettleton Trustees.

In 1833 there was an (unsuccessful) attempt to sell John Nettleton's estates as illustrated by the following Notice in the Leeds Mercury on 21 December 1833;



There is no evidence that further notices were placed as suggested in the above notice and it seems unlikely that this would have included Sowood Farm which was subject to the Scholefield Agreements. In any case any sale would also be subject to the covenants imposed by John Marsden in 1797 that Elizabeth Nettleton had a life interest in the farm.

Between 1826 and 1836, and again in 1848, John Nettleton junior is party to several agreements involving the lands left to him by his father. These legal agreements<sup>91</sup> are recorded in the Memorials of Deeds at the Wakefield Deeds Registry but the *law hand* who transcribed the key points from the original deeds has left the reader struggling to make sense of the purpose or motive of these deeds which in the main also include John Scholefield. It is difficult at this time to make sense of what John Nettleton was up to but it turned out to be no good and by 1853 when he spent time in York Gaol pending his Insolvency hearing.

But the Nettletons generally are not yet finished with the legal complexities associated with this period of the Farm's history. In 1836 a Chancery Court case is to hear a suit brought by William Barber and Henry Lees Edwards. The defendants were the wife, children, some grandchildren and the executors and witnesses to the Will of John Nettleton the elder deceased. John Scholefield is also a defendant in the case.

The nature of the action launched by William Barber of Southowram and supported by his solicitor John Lees Edwards appears to involve deeds entered into by William Barber and John Nettleton and/or certain members of his family in 1815, 1828 and 1830. Several of the defendants (excluding family members) were questioned in the Talbot and Falcon in Wakefield on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1836 when several questions were put them. In general terms they were asked how long they had known John Nettleton the elder, whether the signature on his Will and codicil was his and whether they thought him to be of sound mind at the time he signed those documents. Certain of the defendants were also

<sup>90</sup> There is uncertainty as to the identity of this John Marsden who is probably the John born about 1790 in Horbury and living at Sowood in 1821 married to Charlotte. He may be the 'natural child' of Rachel Marsden baptised at Horbury in 1794 but no father's name has emerged.

<sup>91</sup> West Yorks Archives Deeds – John Nettleton 1826, 1828, 1836 & 1848.

asked about signatures on the 1815, 1828 and 1830 Deeds. All of those questioned had known him for various periods of time and confirmed his signature and that his state of mind was sound. There is no indication in these papers of the purpose of this Chancery Court case or of the outcome but it does provide another example of the complications which appear to have beset the Nettleton family in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Ossett Poll Book for 1835 and 1837 there are no entries for the name Nettleton but in 1843 it appears that John Nettleton junior is claiming the right to be accepted as a registered voter in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His case is heard by the first Court considering claims held in September 1843. The following press article from the Leeds Mercury 23 September 1843 sets out the case and the findings. By this time the "John Nettleton senior" mentioned below is the son of John Nettleton (1744-1823) and Elizabeth (nee Marsden)

**John Nettleton, senior, Sowood House, claimed for an undivided share in freehold and copyhold land and buildings, at Stors Hill, Ossett, and was opposed by the Whigs.**  
**In the outset, Mr. NEWMAN called for the production of the notice of claim served upon the Overseers. It was produced and shewn to the Claimant, who said that he had signed a paper like that, and that the signature to it was like his hand writing, but he could not say that it was his. Mr. Newman, thereupon, said that he must see the Claimant sign his name in Court, as he (Mr. Newman) had been obliged to do in the morning.**  
**Mr. GRAY suggested that a comparison of hand-writing was not evidence.**  
**The Claimant, however, signed his name; and it was so much like the signature to the notice that had been produced, that Mr. NEWMAN said he would not press the objection on that ground.**  
**The vote was afterwards disallowed upon the merits.**

It seems that John Nettleton was successful in convincing the Court that his signature was genuine but the Court found against him based "upon the merits". This may have been because he claimed "an undivided share" and a 1/6<sup>th</sup> interest did not qualify him for the vote or that the Court were not convinced he had a share in any case. There is something about the activities of this John Nettleton (1787-1867) which, perhaps unfairly, attracts suspicion.

The land and buildings at Sowood Farm are recorded in the **1843** Ossett Tithe Award thus;

**OWNER;** John Nettleton Exors (Joseph Brook & Josh Nettleton); **Occupied** by John Hill.

Field No.	Field name	Acres	Roods	Perches
69	Croft	2	18	00
497	Ing	4	2	35
500	Little Ox Close	3	1	32
496	Great Ox Close	6	2	00
Total of this holding 15 acres. 1 rood.5 perches				

The farm holding shown in earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century documents often included the five acre Mapplewell Close and this is recorded elsewhere in the 1843 record. However it was probably farmed as part of the Sowood Farm holding.

These two 1843 records are revealing in that they indicate, or suggest, that John Nettleton was "of Sowood House" in 1843 and whilst he may have been working there, the 1841 Census records him as an Agricultural labourer living at High Street Horbury. The record is also significant because it

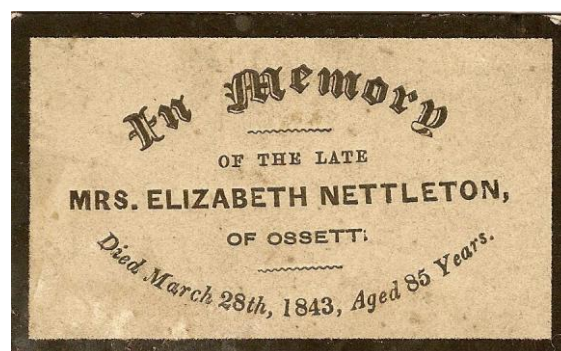


demonstrates that 20 years after John Nettleton the Elder's death in 1823 his estate has still not been finalised - no doubt to do with the John Scholefield transactions and the 1836 Chancery case.

Maybe this was getting too much for the 85 year old Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) – the last link with the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Marsdens at Sowood. Her son Francis and daughter Mary, both in their forties, had died within a 3 week period in January and February 1839. She had suffered the tragedy of short Marsden lives and the long Nettleton litigation and in 1841 she is living alone at Sowood House except for a servant, 20 year old Sarah Nettleton. "Next door" on the Census is Farmer John Hill. It is probable that Elizabeth continued to live in the Sowood Farmhouse whilst John Hill and his family live elsewhere on the Sowood Farm site whilst he works as the tenant farmer. There is however evidence that the Farmhouse itself was once divided to provide accommodation for two families.

The 1841 Census records nine families living on Denton Lane (east). This Ossett Census Enumeration District records properties on the east side of Denton Lane including "Sowood House" (Sowood Farm) so we can be sure that the nine households are on the east side. The only buildings shown on contemporary and earlier maps in this position are at Sowood Farm and closer to Horbury where the house *Rock View* stands today. This tells us that nine families were living on the east side of Denton Lane at, or very close to, the Sowood Farmstead. This suggests more dwellings either purpose built or farm building conversions. There are 46 people with a Denton Lane address and most, if not all, were living at the Sowood farmstead. Elizabeth and her servant are the only ones with the Sowood House address but the house itself may well be providing accommodation for more than Elizabeth. Some of the dwellings in which they lived may be purpose built or farm building conversions. John Nettleton, Elizabeth's husband died in 1823 aged 79 and in his later years he would have found it more and more difficult to run the farm and it is possible that part of the solution was to build dwellings within Sowood Farm, convert farm buildings and divide the Farm house itself. Income was all important and there was an increasing demand for accommodation as the local mines and mills expanded. Most of the families living at Sowood derived their living from mining and the woollen industry.

Elizabeth Nettleton was buried on 31st March 1843. It may be significant that in 1841 her son John Nettleton was described as a farmer but living in Horbury whilst his mother was living alone (but for a servant) in the large Sowood Farmhouse and employing a tenant farmer to work the land. Elizabeth's death in 1843 did however remove one impediment to the unresolved issue of her husband, John's estate which he left with his Executors on his death in 1823.



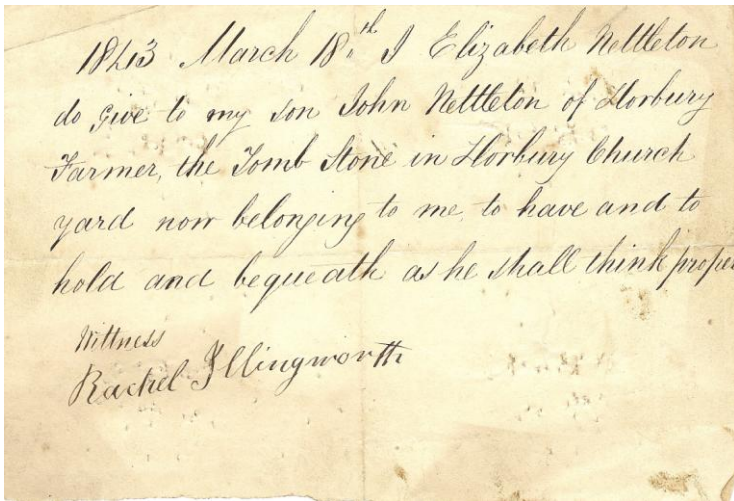
Memorial card for Elizabeth's death in 1843<sup>92</sup>

Because, in law, he was the owner of the estate (even though it had been left to her in 1797 by her brother, John Marsden) his Executors could not, perhaps, wind up his estate until her death because it was a provision of John Marsden's bequest that the Ossett estates, including Sowood Farm, be left to her *surviving children at the time of her death*. 1843 appears to be the final year in which records show John Nettleton's Trustees as the owners of the Ossett Sowood estate. Under the law today it would not have been shown in his ownership. No evidence has emerged that John Nettleton's estate was finally distributed and the 1814 and 1823 agreements between the family and John Scholefield appear to have remained outstanding after 1843.

---

<sup>92</sup> Courtesy of Ruth Nettleton

Elizabeth Nettleton's Will is dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 1843 just two weeks before she was buried. She makes her mark on the Will and it is witnessed by Thomas Haigh solicitor of Horbury. Unlike her husband, she does name her son John Nettleton, and his brother Robert, as her Executors and the Will is proved on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1843. Elizabeth leaves £9 to her son in law Percival Terry in settlement of her



debt to him which perhaps provides an indication of the state of her finances (and of her sons) towards the end of her life. She leaves her wearing apparel to her daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Joseph Brook<sup>93</sup>. The Butcher's shop and some adjacent land is left to her son Joseph who currently occupies the shop. The remainder of her personal and real estate is to be disposed of by her Executors and distributed to her surviving three children John, Robert and Elizabeth. Her other four children had pre-deceased her. The day after Elizabeth made her Will she signed over the family tomb stone in Horbury

Church to her son, John. The witness, Rachel Illingworth, is her cousin, wife of William Illingworth of The Rocks (now Rock Cottages), Storrs Hill<sup>94</sup>.

Those three children who pre-deceased their mother in 1843 may have had their advances at the time of the 1823 agreement. In the event of default John Scholefield, it appears, would become the owner of that share which he would realise on Elizabeth Nettleton's death. He was, by all accounts, a fair and generous man known to present food hampers to the poor of Horbury twice a year; but this was business and he was a very capable Horbury Attorney and an astute businessman. Almost certainly by 1843 John Scholefield would own 3/6ths or 50% - of Sowood because three of the Nettleton children had died by then and no evidence has emerged of any sums being repaid to John Scholefield.

In 1843 Scholefield may have become owner of the other 50% unless the surviving children repaid their 1823 mortgage. It is clear from other events of the time that one of the surviving children, John Nettleton, would not be in a position to repay his 1/6<sup>th</sup> part of the mortgage leaving the other two children (Joseph Nettleton and Elizabeth Brook) with a minority share in the farm (unless they could raise enough to fund John's share). No evidence has emerged that the three surviving children paid off the mortgage which presumably would default leaving John Scholefield the 100% owner of Sowood which, in effect, he had acquired at a figure equal to the amount of the advances he made to the children in 1823.

In 1843<sup>95</sup> therefore John Scholefield may have become the mortgagee in possession of Sowood Farm and the other Ossett estates of John Nettleton (1787-1823). John Scholefield died in 1850 aged 90. Yet it appears that the ownership of Sowood continued to be recorded as being in the possession of Nettleton Executors so it is clear that the family continued to have some claim on the ownership. By 1876 however it will be seen that Scholefield's descendants were claiming rights to the property by inheritance and so they too held an interest which, by 1904, they were able to exercise and John Scholefield's grandson, Captain Lionel Battye, became beneficial owner of Sowood farm.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Brook (1791-1868) was also an Executor of John Nettleton's Estate in 1823. More significantly he is the 3x Great Grandfather of Peter Brook and Christine Burnell (nee Brook) of Sowood Farm in 2012

<sup>94</sup> 1843 Note of the Tombstone bequest courtesy of Ruth Nettleton

<sup>95</sup> The Memorials of Deeds are lacking in respect of the detail of these transactions. Perhaps the law hands who transcribed them struggled with the detail and therefore it was omitted. The analysis here is what the writer believes was the situation but in any event John Scholefield's descendants are subsequently recorded as owners of Sowood Farm.



It is interesting to surmise what might have been for some of the Nettleton children had they not entered the 1823 Agreement with John Scholefield, In 1823 they each had a one sixth share in Sowood Farm but because three of the children had died before 1843 the three survivors would each have had one third in 1843, the year of their mother's death. Two of these survivors, Joseph Nettleton and Elizabeth Brook –wife of Joseph Brook – would surely have found the third survivor, John Nettleton, a willing seller of his share. The Brooks would have then have had a half share in Sowood Farm in 1843. However that is not how it appears to have happened and the Brooks would have to wait another 105 years until 1948 when they were able to purchase the whole of Sowood Farm.

In 1851 John Nettleton (1787-1867), now *John Nettleton the elder*, was 64 years of age and a Cow Keeper and Gardener living in Ossett Town. In 1841 he was recorded as an Agricultural labourer living in Horbury but until then his employment was as a cardmaker in the woollen industry with the exception of 1822 when he was a husbandman. This may have been the time he was assisting his father at Sowood Farm. What is not known is where he was working as a farmer in 1841 and 1851 but it is possible he was working at Sowood Farm even though the Census records show that tenant farmers were working the farm at that time (John Hill in 1841 and Charles Allen in 1851 – the address of the farm on these censuses was Denton Lane and Storrs Hill respectively). At this time the census records eight families living on the east side (ie the same side as Sowood farm) of Denton Lane some with a Denton Lane address and some with a Storrs Hill address. Most, if not all would be living in accommodation at the farm – a total of 45 people.

Things were about to take a nasty turn for the worse because in 1853 John Nettleton the elder aged 66 of Ossett, labourer and Cow Keeper is in "the Gaol of York". The London Gazette of 9<sup>th</sup> August 1853 tells us so and three days later the same publication adds that *John Nettleton the elder, sued with Francis Marsden Nettleton (his son) and committed with him as John Nettleton, late of Ossett, Yorkshire Labourer and Cow-keeper, formerly of Storshill in the township of Ossett aforesaid Labourer and Small Farmer*. On 30 September 1853 John Nettleton the elder, late of Ossett, Labourer and Cow-keeper is declared insolvent. John Nettleton, it seems, has run out of ways to raise money and is bankrupt.

By 1861 John Nettleton was living at South Town Gate Ossett, an Agricultural Labourer aged 74. He has had an eventful life but this too came to end on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1867 and he was buried at Ossett Holy Trinity on 5<sup>th</sup> December. He made his Will on 6<sup>th</sup> April **1867** and this was proved on 30<sup>th</sup> April **1888**, some 21 years after his death. Probate was not sought by his sons Richard Dewhirst Nettleton and David Nettleton until 1888 and although the reason is unknown it may have been to do with the 1823, subsequent Agreements and the 1836 Chancery Case. The Will provided for John's assets to be realised and divided between his two sons. This was done and they each received £2 10s 0d. (ie two pounds and fifty pence each).

But it seems the continuing saga of the John Nettleton Wills, begun in 1823, was not to end in 1888 either. John's son, also called John Nettleton died in April **1866**, the year before his father. His estate was not Administered until 4<sup>th</sup> June **1903** – *37 years after his death* - by his son Walter Nettleton. He left £131 14s 4d which was exactly £10 more than "spinster" Harriett Nettleton's estate which also was Administered<sup>96</sup> by Walter Nettleton (her brother) on 15 June 1903. Harriett died on 28 May 1865 some 38 years earlier. Even more odd is that John Nettleton's daughter, Harriett, was aged 2 when she died in 1865 and for some reason it appears the Nettletons are either seeking to prolong the long running legal dispute or are keeping open their options for as long as possible. Odder even than this is that the Administration of Harriet's estate granted in 1903 refers to Harriet's death on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1865. She was buried at Horbury on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1865 – the day before. It seems that the dispute had gone on so long that even the date of poor Harriet's death was forgotten or quoted incorrectly.

In 1873 the England Return of Land Owners records John Nettleton, Trustees, Horbury as owners of 26 acres 3 roods and 8 perches

Much of what has been written above about the Nettleton agreements is an attempt to deduce the course of legal events between 1814 and 1903. Whilst strenuous efforts have been made to examine

---

<sup>96</sup> Both awards to Walter were Administrations not probate and no information survives as to the details.

all the available records to determine the actual course of events the interpretation of those documents may not be accurate. In 1823 John Nettleton's Codicil refers to an agreement of the same year and mentions sums of £220 and £440. In 1903, some 80 years later two later Nettleton Wills leave almost identical amounts of about £120. There is something very odd about the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nettleton Wills which may be linked to the Chancery case and/or to the 1823 legal arrangements between the Nettletons and John Scholefield. For now at least this must remain a mystery.

Meanwhile at Sowood Farm in 1861 the tenant farmer was George Mitchell, *Rag merchant and Farmer of 50 acres employing one man*. This "one man" could be John Nettleton. George Mitchell was living with his wife, Sarah Ann (nee Marsden) and their son Arthur. Sarah Ann Marsden was the 4x great grand daughter of Francis Marsden the 1689 builder of Sowood Farm. She was an only child and an orphan by the age of 10 having lost both of her parents between 1840 and 1844. She had lived with her parents in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century cottage on Storrs Hill behind where the Tram Sheds were built some years later. She probably remained there after her parents' deaths and in 1851 she was recorded with her Uncle and his family who moved in to take care of her. In 1859 she married George Mitchell and they moved to Sowood Farm around this time. By 1871 they had moved to a house which they built in the early/mid 1860's— later known as Rock Cottage.

This house was on the Horbury side of Denton Lane, in Horbury Parish, even though it was directly opposite to, and only yards away from, Sowood Farm. In about 1934 this was the house in which Bennett Brook and his wife and children were to live until 1957 whilst he and his wife, Mabel Wormald, brought up their young family and from where Bennett ran Sowood Farm following his father's death in 1936. By 1957 the house was about 100 years old and in need of repair but the failure of the owner to attend to the property led to the demolition of the dwelling in the late 1950's/early 1960's

The Farm's address on the 1861 Census is Denton Lane and it appears that there are other dwellings here which may have been new builds or agricultural building conversions. In addition to George Mitchell in the Farmhouse (which it is known was once divided to provide two dwellings) there are a further five families all of which are in Ossett Parish and therefore on the same side of Denton Lane as Sowood Farm. It is probable that at least four of these were within the curtilage of the Farm and it is possible that one, the blacksmith, was situated where the two houses built in 1898, Rock Mount and Rock View, stand today. The 1790 Estate Map shows a building in this position.

By 1871 George Mitchell has moved on – across the road to his newly built home and the farm is now worked by another tenant farmer (the fourth in thirty years). His name is William Crowther and earlier records show him working land on Storrs hill and living in one of the cottages on Matty Marsden Lane. In 1871 William was shown on Denton Lane as a farmer of 30 acres employing himself and one boy (his 14 year old son). The acreage equates mainly to the adjacent land, and Mapplewell Close. It is less certain that the farmhouse is divided to provide for two families but there are about 35 people living in accommodation in five families excluding William Crowther. This suggests four or five dwellings. Elizabeth Brook (nee Nettleton) died in 1864 and her brother John Nettleton died in December 1867 but it seems unlikely that he had regular work at Sowood Farm in his final years. His brother Robert died, aged 67, in May 1867 in Batley where he lived alone in lodgings. His occupation was described as "poultry and byelaw man". John Nettleton, since 1816 the eldest son, was the last surviving child of John and Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden)

The presence of John Scholefield in the history of Sowood Farm emerges again in 1876. John Scholefield was born in 1760 and died in 1850. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century he was a very successful Attorney at Law and the second largest owner of land in Horbury. Land and property was his business. John Scholefield married widow Elizabeth Bayldon in 1790 and they had one child, Margaret, in 1791. In 1827 she married magistrate William Walker Battye of Skelton Hall near Richmond in North Yorkshire. They had four children including Richard Battye, born 1834, who became a Barrister at Law. Thus Richard Battye was John Scholefield's grandson.

In 1866 Richard Battye JP of Skelton Hall and Crosland Hall Yorkshire married Frances Bibby (1845-1921) the daughter of James Jenkinson Bibby (D.L., J.P. High Sheriff of Shropshire) of Hardwicke Grange Salop. James Bibby was an extremely rich man who founded the Bibby Shipping Line. Richard Battye and his bride Frances had their first child and only son in 1867. They named him Lionel Richard James Scholefield Battye and he went on to an Eton education and a career in the Hussars where he became a Captain. He was forever to be known as “Captain Battye”

Captain Battye had a rather tragic upbringing. He never knew his paternal great grandfather, John Scholefield, whose name he carried and his paternal grandparents, James Jenkinson Battye and his wife Margaret (nee Scholefield) both died in 1869 within a period of four months. His barrister father, Richard spent his time between his London homes at Queens Gardens Hyde Park London and Skelton Hall Yorkshire and he paid occasional visits too to his wife’s parents’ home at Hardwicke Grange in Shropshire. It was here in 1873 that he died “the result of an accident” at the age of 39.

Consequently Captain Battye’s mother Frances inherited her husband’s estate but the early 1870’s would have been a tragic and complex time for her as she was left to manage the estates of her parents in law and husband who all died between 1869 and 1873. More importantly she was a young widow with several children, all under the age of 7 in 1873.

In 1873<sup>97</sup> Richard Battye Exors Queens Gardens London were owners of 160 acres of estate in the West Riding of Yorkshire whilst his father’s estate, Wm. W Battye Exors (Huddersfield), have 171 acres. Included in Richard’s estate would be Sowood Farm and other local land holdings, mainly in Horbury which were inherited by his mother Margaret Battye (nee Scholefield) from her father’s estate in 1850.

In 1876<sup>98</sup> there are signs that the various Battye estates may be moving towards a conclusion. On 20 May 1876 Frances Battye, in a Deed with The Duke of Leeds, The Lord of the Manor of Wakefield registers that she was *then seised or conferred for an Estate of Inheritance by Copy of Court Roll...* The Deed covers 144 acres of land in the West Riding with estates at Upperrhong, Netherhouse, Wooldale, Horbury and Ossett. There is only one entry for Ossett as follows;

No.			Acres	Roods	Perches
748	Two Cottages and gardens	at Storrs Hill	0	0	21
	Sowood House & Farm Buildings )	- do -		1	34
750	Three Cottages adjoining )				
746	Great Ox Close	- do -	6	2	13
747	Little Ox Close	- do -	4	0	25
749	The Ing	- do -	4	2	29
820	Calf Croft	- do -		2	14
751	Plantation	- do -			5
752	- do -	- do -			14
634	Mapplewell or Lights Close	Middle Common	5	1	16

All of the Farm, cottages and land is occupied by William Crowther or his undertenants. Some of the names of the Closes were first recorded in the 1676 Court Roll confirming Francis Marsden’s acquisition of Sowood farm and later in John Marsden’s Will in 1735. These are repeated here, 200 years later in 1876 and confirm that the acreage of the farmed land at this side of Denton Lane has been virtually unchanged for 200 years and it will remain this way for almost another 140 years. The only variations to the 1676/1735 holding are Mapplewell Close (which was devised by Robert Haigh in 1768 to his daughter Hannah, wife of Francis Marsden) and the absence of several fields on the south side of Denton Lane which were left to other sons of the early Marsdens.

<sup>97</sup> 1873 Owners of Land in England

<sup>98</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Service Deed reference 754 348 370

The 1876 reference above also confirms the Census entries in the years 1841 -1871 in that it shows three cottages “adjoining” Sowood House which suggests these were in the farm yard itself. Two more cottages with gardens are also recorded and it is certain<sup>99</sup> that these were situated on the same side of Denton Lane as Sowood House, maybe 50 metres or so closer to Horbury than the farm and probably with a frontage to Denton Lane. Census records for 1821-1871 testify the presence of dwellings in addition to the Farmhouse and on occasion these provided homes to 35-45 people usually earning their living from working in the mining and woollen industries.

In the 1881 Census William Crowther is still working Sowood Farm as tenant farmer and much is similar to 1871 except there are far fewer people registered at Denton Lane in the Census. In addition to William Crowther there are five families ( a stone breaker, miner and a weaver), comprising about 29 people, with a Denton Lane address and almost certainly all living within the Sowood Farm curtilage .

In spite of the death of John Nettleton in 1867 the Poor Law Valuation List for Ossett in 1881 records the Farm and adjacent cottages in the ownership of *Jno Nettleton Trustees* and as mentioned earlier even though John Nettleton had died in 1867 his sons did not apply for probate until 1888. The reason for the estate being unresolved is unknown but this may explain why the Nettleton Trustees are shown as owners. This contrasts with Frances Battye’s 1876 agreement with the Duke of Leeds regarding her entitlement for a right of inheritance including *Sowood House*. The wording however could be interpreted as being consistent with a continuing Nettleton ownership or interest to the extent that John Nettleton’s estate may still have had the opportunity under the 1823 Agreement to repay the advances with interest. When his estate was finally wound up in 1888 it had a value of £5 suggesting it was unlikely that sufficient funds would ever be forthcoming to purchase a farmhouse, outbuildings, cottages and about 22 acres of land.

The 1881 Poor Law record is more helpful in its description of the Farm at this time. The Farm has five “cottages” housing five families. Each of the dwellings is two storeys and one has a pantry. The Farmhouse comprises a *two storey house (144 sq yds), kitchen (30 sq yds), and adjacent buildings are shown as a two storey barn (77 sq yds), a two storey mistal/barn (72 sq yds), Two storey old cottage used as mistal, hen place (two storey), cart shed (open – 78 sq yds)*. The land , all in William Crowther’s occupation is listed as;

plot no.	634;	5acres	1 rood	16 perches;	
	746	6	2	13	
	747	4	0	23	
	749	4	3	29	
	750	0	1	34	
	745a		2	18	owned by Robert Scott and occupied by William Crowther,

Throughout this research one of the difficulties has been to locate the home of John Marsden (1704-1742) who inherited the Farm on the death of his father in 1735. John’s Will in 1742, proved 1744, suggests that he did not live at Sowood Farm in 1742. He was also described in his Will as John Marsden of Ossett Lights which would put him somewhere close and to the east of the Farm. One possible location suggested was at the Horbury end of Manor Lane close to the ancient “Leake’s Stile”

John Marsden described his home as “*that messuage or Tenement wherein I now live with all the gardens orchards barns stables cowhouse and buildings thereunto belonging with one close of meadow called Calf Croft...* but it has never been clear where this Close stood. The 1876 and 1881 records above link the name Calf Croft with the name Scott. The 1813 Ossett Inclosure Order shows the Scott family in ownership of an area of land at the Horbury end of Manor Lane suggesting that this location, within Ossett Lights, could have been John Marsden’s home in 1742. If it was then the dwelling had gone by 1850 for a building is not shown in that position on the O.S. map of that year.

---

<sup>99</sup> The Census Enumeration District in which these properties are located relates only to the east side of Denton Lane/Horbury Road

The description of the cottages in the 1881 Poor Law record suggests that at one time there may have been as many as seven "cottages", of one sort or another at the Farm. It is unlikely that they were cottages in the way we might think of them today and the accommodation probably included farm building conversions and "one up – one down" type accommodation. By 1881 it is clear that at least two of these, perhaps because of their unsuitability as dwellings, has reverted to agricultural use.. The 1891 Census suggests that much of the earlier housing at Sowood has come to the end of its useful life and there are only two families in addition to the tenant farmer who is John Tasker. By this time it appears that buildings previously used as dwellings have either been demolished or are being used for agricultural purposes.

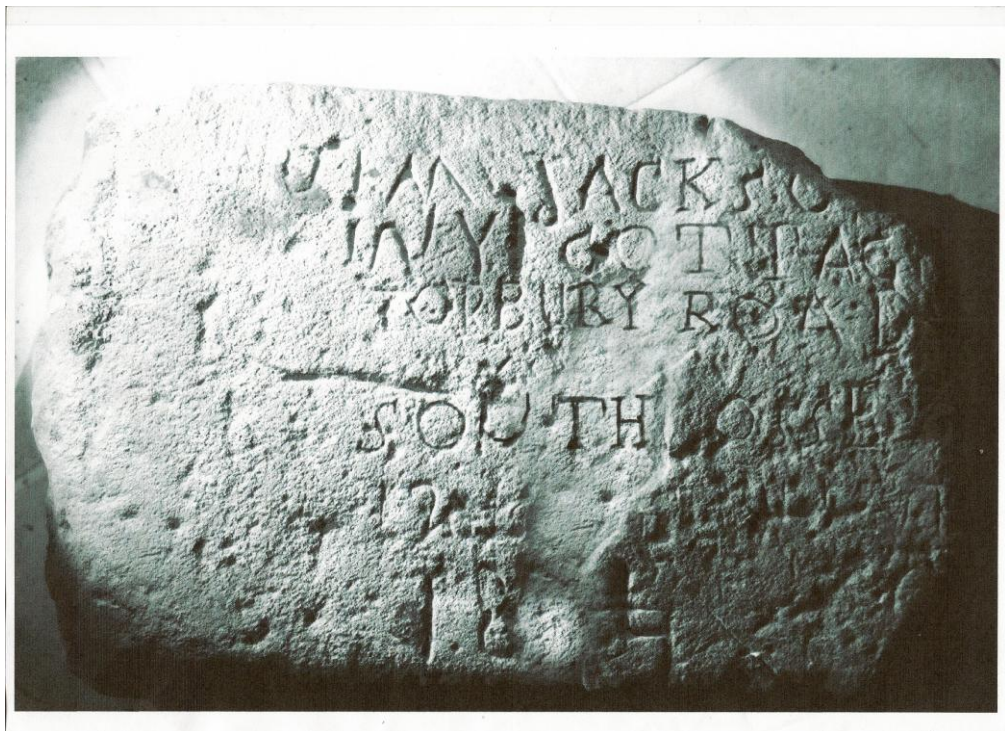
One of the families still living at the farm in 1891 is called Jackson and they were still here in 1901 having been first recorded at Sowood in 1841. Consequently the family lived here for at least 60 years. In May 2012 Peter Brook of Sowood Farm mentioned that, a few years earlier, he had found a large stone with engravings that he could barely make out.

After some cleaning and impressive photographic reconstruction by local historian Neville Ashby it was possible to make out most of the words on the stone which is shown below.

### The Story of the “Sowood Stone”

The stone is irregular in height width and depth but is approximately 28 cm in height, 43 cm in width and varying between 4cm and 7 cm in depth. It is heavy and would be difficult to handle with ease were it not for a complete break in the stone which renders it into two unequal parts. Generally the inscription is crude and clearly it is not the work of a master mason. However it may have been inscribed by someone familiar with working with stone.

In 1841, a 35 year old miner, *James Jackson*, was living with his wife and six children on Denton Lane (east), in a property within the curtilage of Sowood Farm.



**JIM JACKSON  
IVY COTTAGE  
HORBURY ROAD  
SOUTH OSSETT  
12 ???????  
18?4**

In 1841, a 35 year old miner, *James Jackson*, was living with his wife and six children on Denton Lane (east), in a property within the curtilage of Sowood Farm. There is evidence that he may have been living there in 1829

James Jackson and his family were still living at Denton Lane in 1851 although the address is Storrs Hill which echoes the Farm address during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is certain that they are still living in a property at Sowood Farm and one of their children is named James, born



about 1844. The 1851, 1861 & 1871 Census also record James Jackson senior living in a cottage at Sowood Farm although by 1861 his son James has left to live elsewhere. James Jackson senior died in 1872 having lived at the Sowood cottage for more than 30 years.

The Sowood cottage however is still occupied in 1881 by the Jackson family because James' eldest son William has taken over the tenancy and he has a son, named James Jackson born in 1856. William died in 1883, aged 48, but his widow continued to inhabit the property and in 1891 she was living in the four room cottage with her children, including James Jackson born in 1856.

James was the grandson of the James Jackson first recorded here in 1841 – fifty years earlier. More importantly his occupation is recorded as a “mason's labourer” and the likelihood is that the Sowood Stone was his work. The date on the Stone is illegible and there is no sign of James in 1891 although his mother remains in the cottage (which appears not to have occupants in 1901)

No record of James Jackson, born 1856, has emerged beyond 1891 but it is certain that his grandfather James, Uncle James and father William occupied the Sowood Cottage between about 1830 and sometime in the 1890's – approximately 60 years of occupation by the Jackson family.

The date on the stone is obscured by weathering and a severe breakage but it appears to read 18?4. Perhaps this was the year that mason's labourer James Jackson moved on from Sowood Cottage. The stone itself was found close to the dwelling which once stood to the front of Sowood House which was demolished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century to make way for a new farm worker's single storey dwelling. A photograph of this old dwelling is shown below and it seems likely that this was Ivy Cottage, home to the Jackson family, for more than 60 years.



**Sowood Farm with Ivy Cottage (demolished late 1990's) to the right.**





# The Brooks of Sowood Farm – 1896 to 2013

## Introduction

In the 1901 Census the only resident on this part of Horbury Road was living at the Farm and there is no longer any sign of families living in other dwellings here. In 1871 the Farm provided accommodation for five or six families and almost 40 people but in 1901 it is occupied by only one family. This is **Fredrick Brook (1864-1936)**<sup>100</sup> the grandson of Joseph Brook who was the husband of Elizabeth Nettleton (nee Marsden) and Executor of John Nettleton's Estate in 1823. It is possible that Joseph assisted his ageing father in law, John Nettleton, at the Farm in the early 1820's when he and Elizabeth left Gawthorpe to live in Ossett where they were living, at Town End, in 1841.

Remarkably, by his grandfather's marriage to Elizabeth Nettleton, Fredrick Brook is related to the builder of Sowood Farm, Francis Marsden (1651-1718) who is Fredrick's 5<sup>th</sup> great grandfather. This fact was unknown to the present Brook owners of Sowood before this research was undertaken. By about 1896 the Brook family were once again working Sowood Farm almost 100 years after the last Marsden farmed it and 200 years after a Marsden built or re-built it. Fredrick's arrival puts an end to the long trail of tenant farmers throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Farm once again becomes less of an "investment property" and more of a working farm with a longer term and more settled future.

The Brooks also have their own history at the farm. **Joanye Brouke** died of the Plague and was buried at Denton's House (Sowood Farm) on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1593. She was one of thirteen, including eight members of the Denton family, to contract the deadly disease and be buried at the Denton's House. It seems likely that she was a family friend or servant at Sowood Farm perhaps helping the stricken Dentons. In a small community like Sowood and Ossett was in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century there can be little doubt that she was closely related to the other Brooks living at Sowood and Ossett at that time. Joanye was born about 1560 and it has not been possible to trace the name of her father but it can have been only one of four men, Christopher, George, William or Richard Brook. These names echo down the ages in the Brook line and Fredrick's great grandfather had brothers George and William and Uncles Christopher and Richard. It is probable that Joanye Brook buried at Sowood Farm in 1593 is the 6<sup>th</sup> Great grand aunt<sup>101</sup> of Fredrick Brook.

**Joseph Brook (1791-1868)** is a more recent Brook connection with Sowood with his presence there in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible he did work on the farm during some of this period and in 1822 he was named as one of the two Executors of John Nettleton, the then owner of Sowood Farm. Joseph had married John Nettleton's eldest daughter Elizabeth in 1815 and they had 10 children. Four of the first five of those children are described as being of Gawthorpe and the 1821 Census records Joseph, his wife Elizabeth and four children living in house 886<sup>102</sup>. In house 887 Joseph's widowed mother Jane was living alone.

It is difficult to be specific about the location of individual properties in the 1821 Census but it is certain that house 886 is situated in North Ossett and probably in the area then described as Street Side/Gawthorpe. A comparison with subsequent Censuses discovers that one of Joseph's close neighbours (the Boulds) in 1821 were still living in that locality in 1841 when the Census makes the location much clearer. It is probable from this comparison that Joseph Brook was working about 12 acres of land which was a sublet part of Lord Cardigan's estate in the Wakefield New Park. The 12 acres may have been, part of a larger 98 acre holding which went by the name of Upper Park Farm.

The birth registrations of Joseph's first eight children record him as a clothier (twice) and a farmer (six times) and the 1821 Census also reveals that in his Gawthorpe home he has three servants, including

---

<sup>100</sup> Many records show Fredrick spelled as Frederick but some (eg a codicil to his Will) show the importance of the spelling – with one 'e'. Perhaps it distinguished him from his younger nephew and friend Frederick Joseph Brook (1877-1957) who farmed the nearby 32 acre Broad Royd Farm.

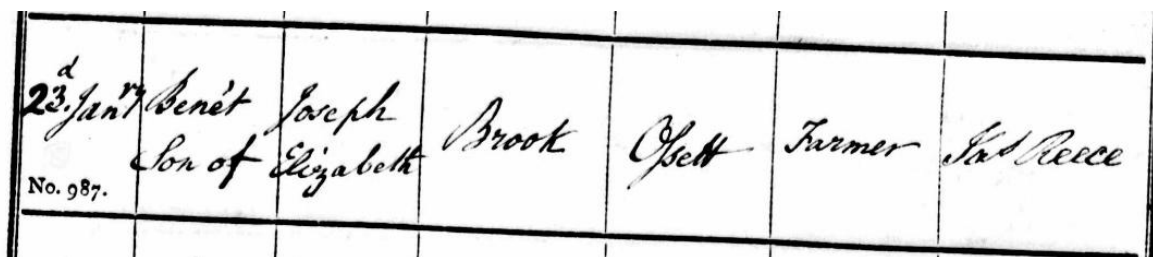
<sup>101</sup> Joanye Brook would be 9<sup>th</sup> great grand aunt of the present Brook generation – Peter Brook & Christine Burnell (nee Brook)

<sup>102</sup> The 1821 Census does not record addresses but each dwelling is allotted consecutive number.

his cousin Percival Brook. This Census entry has the feel of a farm holding and records<sup>103</sup> show that Joseph's father *Joseph Brook the elder (1744-1813)* owned and worked land at Gawthorpe and also that *Widow Brook*<sup>104</sup>, probably Joseph the elder's, mother also had land holdings. All in all these ownerships added to about 30 acres and in all likelihood they are situated in the vicinity of Lord Cardigan's Upper Park Farm in New Park Gawthorpe. Joseph the elder's brother, George also had a holding of about 40 acres in 1775.

Fredrick's grandfather, Joseph, who married Elizabeth Nettleton, turned his hand to farming as shown above but by the time of the birth of his ninth child in 1830 he was an Ossett clothier and at the birth registration of his last child, Brookes Brook in 1833 he was the Licensee of The George on Bank Street Ossett. Raising nine surviving children is not a simple task and Joseph appears to have found that farming would provide an insufficient income to feed so many mouths. For most of the rest of his life he is recorded as a clothier and/or weaver.

**Bene't<sup>105</sup> Brook (1825-1913)** was one of Joseph's sons, and Fredrick's father, and seemingly the first of Joseph's sons to be born in Ossett. This suggests that he moved from Gawthorpe between 1822 and 1825 and perhaps this was about 1823 when his father in law, John Nettleton, died.



**Bene't Brook's 1825 Baptism record Ossett Undivided and Holy Trinity Church**

Until 1861 Bene't worked as a wool cloth weaver but a move from Ossett Town Gate to The Green in the 1860's was to enable him to establish a grocery and butchery business at 18 The Green. Bene't worked as a butcher and grocer until 1881 but from 1891 until 1911 he is described as a farmer in the Censuses. He was better known however for his Butchery business. The 1893 Kelly's West Riding Trade Directory shows his Directory entry as a Butcher of The Green and he continued to live there until his death in 1913. It is not certain where he did his farming but it is possible in the later years that he helped his son Fredrick at Sowood. In 1890 Bene't, or by then Bennett, Brook rose to the position of Chairman of the Local Board in Ossett.

This was the final year in which Ossett was governed by a Board and the following year saw the Borough of Ossett gain status as a Borough with its own Mayor and Council. Bennett Brook stood unsuccessfully for the Council in 1891. He stood again in 1902, aged 77 when he was elected to the Council. He was also a leading light in the Ossett Temperance movement, in spite, or maybe because, of his father, Joseph, being one time landlord of The George. One of Bennett's sons, Eli from whom he was estranged, was a farmer for most of his life but by 1911, two years before Bennett's death he was landlord of the Boar's Head at Long Preston in North Yorkshire. At least three of Eli's children went on to work in farming and dairy businesses

The above history demonstrates that the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Brooks had roots in Gawthorpe and that farming was in their blood at least as far back as John Brook (born 1717) and his wife "Widow" Brook. They were also influential and respected members of Ossett society.

**Fredrick Brook(1864-1936)**, therefore, had a farming pedigree when he became the farmer at Sowood Farm in 1896. He was still however a tenant and ownership remained with Frances Battye. In 1901, Fredrick is recorded as a self employed cattle dealer and living at Horbury Road - Sowood Farm with his wife Lilly (nee Hey) and children Bennett (aged 9), Alice (7) and Bertha (1 month). He had a 22 year old farm worker living at the Farm and helping him with the work. The Census provides

<sup>103</sup> Ossett Valuation 1775, Land Tax Redemption 1798

<sup>104</sup> Widow Brook's land holdings are recorded in the 1775 Ossett Valuation [John Goodchild Collection]

<sup>105</sup> Bene't is a contraction of Benedict. Future generations of Brooks were named Bennett.

no indication of the acreage being worked . Fredrick, or Fred, Brook was working as a cattle dealer which provides a picture of the Farm at this time continuing the long Sowood Farm tradition of cattle farming certainly dating back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century and probably much earlier. Fred's work ,however, was of an entirely different scale.

Fredrick Brook married Lilly Hey in early1891 and moved to Sowood Farm in 1896<sup>106</sup> . Fredrick came from farming stock and in 1881 he was working as a farm labourer and in 1891 as a farmer assisting his father who was also described as a farmer. The family lived on The Green in earlier years where in 1871 and 1881 his father was also a butcher and grocer and his elder brother Eli was a cart driver and milk dealer. It is not certain where Fred was farming before 1896.

On 26<sup>th</sup> May 1904<sup>107</sup> Sowood Farm changed ownership as Frances Battye of 84 Cadogan Gardens Kensington transferred her freehold ownership in lands at Horbury and Ossett to her son Captain Lionel Richard James Scholefield Battye. The transfer included Dwellinghouses at Church Street and Dawson's Yard in Horbury and 15 acres of land at Hall Cliffe. The Ossett land was referred to as House, Barn, Mistall, two Cottages and 16 acres of land in the occupation of Fredrick Brook.

Shortly afterwards Captain Battye appeared again in a Deed<sup>108</sup> relating to Sowood Farm when he sold 288 sq yds in a strip of land, in the occupation of Fredrick Brook, to the Wakefield and District Light Railway Company. A condition of the sale was that the Company construct " *a good and sufficient stone wall 3' 6" above the footway with a gateway and gate 8' 6" wide*" By 2013 most of the wall had been demolished or collapsed. The transaction with the Company is for tramway road widening to facilitate the provision of tram services between Ossett and Horbury.

On 9 November 1904<sup>109</sup> Captain Battye sold 2350 sq yds of land, known as the Croft "now in the occupation of Fredrick Brook" to the Wakefield and District Light Railway Company for the erection of a Tram Depot/Sheds in connection with the proposals to lay a tramway between Ossett and Horbury. The Sheds were demolished in July 2009.

Ossett was to be served by two tramway routes, each operated by a different company<sup>110</sup> . One ran from Ossett to Dewsbury and this one, which ran past Sowood Farm, from Ossett via Horbury to Agbrigg. This was the first of the two routes to be built and all tracks had been laid by August 1904. The route started in Bank Street Ossett until the Dewsbury & Ossett Tramways built the second link, Ossett to Dewsbury, which opened on 12th November 1908. The terminus was then moved from Bank Street to the Market Place in Ossett where the two tramways shared a common loop.

The line which ran along the south side of Station Road to Horbury was mostly a single track with passing loops. Later the track from Sowood Road onwards was doubled but there was always a stretch of single line through the narrow centre of Horbury near Queen StreetThe main, five track, depot for the Ossett-Agbrigg link was at Wakefield Belle Vue but two smaller three track depots were built at Rothwell Haigh and at Sowood Lane Ossett. This latter depot was demolished in July 2009.

---

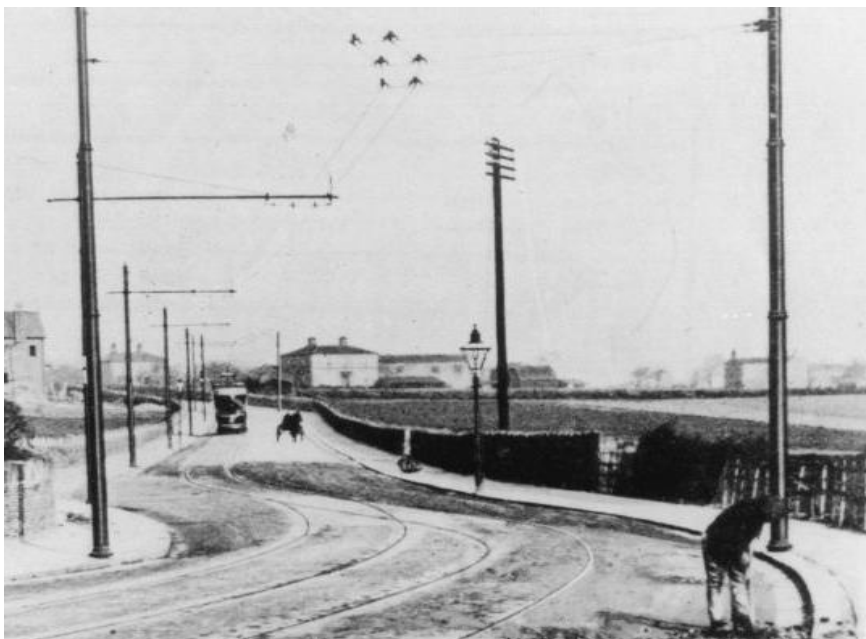
<sup>106</sup> Fredrick Brook's Obituary Ossett Observer 7 March 1936 [Courtesy Eric Walker]

<sup>107</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Service Deeds Registry Deed reference 22 861 388

<sup>108</sup> Ibid: Deed reference 30 942 427 dated 18 July 1904

<sup>109</sup> Ibid: Deed reference 47 486 224

<sup>110</sup> The Tramways of Dewsbury & Wakefield W Pickles 1980



The Ossett to Agbrigg line via Sowood and Horbury closed on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1932 whilst the Ossett to Dewsbury continued a little longer but closed on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1933.

**A Tram on Sowood Lane near Sowood Farm (on right) on the Ossett – Horbury - Agbrigg route about 1910**

In 1910<sup>111</sup> the Sowood Farmstead was recorded as Farmhouse, Farm Buildings and 14 acres 1 rood of land being occupied by Fred Brook and in the ownership of Captain Battye. The description continues “ *Milk Farm known as Sowood Farm....there is a good building frontage on two sides – Trams pass to and from Wakefield frequently. The buildings are very old and dilapidated; they are stone and were erected 1689.*” Fred Brook was the owner and occupier of a wood *mistal* there and this was the earliest reference to a Brook ownership at Sowood. Much more was to come.

The 1911 Census reveals a little more about the farmstead. It seemed that the presence of other families had dwindled in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when there is no sign of other dwellings on the Sowood Farm site. However in 1911 a mining family by the name of Abbott were living in a four room “*Sowood Farm Cottage South Ossett*” This is likely to be the building which stood at the south side of the farmhouse which was demolished to make way for the current single storey farm worker’s dwelling. A photograph of the building is shown elsewhere. The mining family comprised father, mother and four children born in various places including Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire as their 48 year old Devonshire born father sought work in the different coalfields.

Fredrick Brook was still farming the land in 1911 now aged 46 a Cattle Dealer and Farmer and the father of four children, Bennett (aged 19) Alice (17), Ada (15) and Annie (12). Sadly the young Bertha, recorded as a child aged 1 month in the 1901 census died in 1904. Fredrick and his wife Lilly (nee Hey) also provided a home for her father, 76 year old John Hey a retired Cloth Manufacturer originally of Alverthorpe

<sup>111</sup> Inland Revenue (Domesday) Valuation 1910



**Fredrick Brook's son, Bennett, at Sowood Farm early 1900's**

The 1911 Census informs us that the family were living in the six room "Sowood Farm Ossett". Unlike the 1901 Census Fred does not have any live in help but 19 year old Bennett is an "Assistant Farmer" and his 16 year old sister, Alice, was a dressmaker. Bennett's younger sisters, Ada and Annie, were at school.

<p>Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.</p> <p><i>Six Rooms</i></p>	<p>I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.</p> <p>Signature <i>Fredrick Brook</i></p> <p>Postal Address <i>Sowood Farm Ossett</i></p>
--	---

**Fredrick Brook's signature on the 1911 Census Return**

1911 was also the year in which Fredrick Brook made his Will although he lived another 25 years. Over this period he was recorded in several documentary sources but none tell much more than is already known. Fredrick Brook of Sowood Farm Ossett, farmer and cattle dealer, died at his Sowood home on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1936, age 71. Probate was granted to Lilly Brook widow, his son Bennett Brook farmer, and sons in law, Harry Robinson post office clerk and Irvine Marsden bank clerk. Effects £9729 5s 4d. Lilly Brook continued to live at Sowood Farm until her death in late September 1957.

Fredrick's Obituary<sup>112</sup> referred to him as familiar and popular figure in local agricultural circles and a widely respected townsman. Fred, as he was generally known, was a progressive agriculturalist and dairy farmer and had added other Ossett land ownerships to that adjacent to the Farm. He also worked a second farm at Rothwell. As a younger man he exhibited cattle at Ossett and other local Shows and was judge at several. He was also a cattle dealer of a significant scale and a familiar figure at local markets. During WWI, whilst his son Bennett was in France he also acted as a cattle grader for the Government and in 1930 he stood, unsuccessfully, as an Independent candidate in the municipal elections. Fredrick Brook's funeral took place at St. John's Burial ground South Parade on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1936.

<sup>112</sup> The Observer Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1936 [Courtesy of Eric Walker]

Fredrick Brook was too old for service in World War I and farmers' work at home was an important part of the War effort. His son Bennett Brook however was subject to the provisions of the Military Service Act 1916 which introduced conscription and to remain farming he would have had to claim exemption from service on the grounds of his work at Sowood Farm. A Local Tribunal would decide if it was expedient for him to be engaged in other work.

**Bennett Brook (1891-1980)** joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) on 31 May 1918, aged 25, and by August 1917 he had been transferred to the Machine Gun Corps – known as “the suicide squad”. His WWI service record has not survived but his 1918 War Diary has and it records his rapid rise through the ranks to acting Lance Corporal and Corporal which put him in charge of a Machine Gun team of about six men. The Diary tells of his exploits on the Western and Southern Fronts in 1918. This history is not the place to dwell on these events but Bennett did farm Sowood for almost the whole of his life between 1891 and 1980 and WWI was part of his life. Below are two entries (reproduced as they were written) from his 1918 diary which says much about the little lad in the above photograph and how quickly he had to grow into the man who risked his life for his Country on the battlefields of France.

*March 25, Monday*

*We left Carnoy valley at 2 a.m. for the front line. Got there about 5a.m. Fighting very rough. About 11a.m. Jerry attacked on our trenches. 2 of our team were took prisoners and we were nearly surrounded. In getting out we lost all we had but 1 gun. Lucky to get out. A lot of our chaps were wounded. Cpl. Glane, Percal, Ibbotson, Thulis and Sergt Wilks, all wounded. We were fighting a rear gaurd action, Lt Seddon, Harrison, Cpl Vickery, Crozier and I. Very exciting time. Casualties heavy on both sides. At 2.45 p.m. there was 4 of us out of about 22 so Lt Seddon sent me to Carnoy with a message to the Captain. It was for rations and water as we had lost all. When I got there he had moved away to Bray about 10 kilo further away. I got back by limber and found them holding a road about 9p.m. We had something to eat and then he sent me to Rd Chatue with a message I got back to the line about 2.30 and everyone was of(f) our infantry gunners and all. They had got orders to retire on Bray. I was expecting been took prisoner because I knew Jerry was very close to me.*

*May 10<sup>th</sup> Friday*

*We laid down until 4.30 a.m (daybreak) then we set to work making our position and getting our guns laid. We got all ready for about 7a.m. We had 8 guns in. I was in charge of 5 & 6 Guns. Had breakfast at 8a.m. We started our barrage at 9a.m. and fired rapid for the first two hours. We gradually worked down then onto slow fire. Through the day we fired about 1000,000 rounds. We were in a newly made trench and we had things fairly quite. The worst part was some R.F.A. guns behind us were only clearing our parapet by one and a half feet with there shells. We had an extra good day for rations. We seized fire about 7pm and started and got our things packed up ready for moving off. We set off about 8.30 p.m. and gor into the Mortar lorries for Touetencourt. We got there about 11p.m. and had supper. We gor told that the whole attack had been a failure owing to our own artillery firing short onto our own troops. The machine gun barrage would have been a great success.*

In late May 1918 Bennett was hospitalised back to England, in his own words from his War Diary<sup>113</sup> “suffering from trench fever, but only light”. This was a typical Bennett Brook understatement since it was almost three months later, on 24th August 1918, before Bennett was discharged from the Army Hospital. It is not known when he was officially de-mobbed but on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1920 he was awarded a 30% disablement pension which seemed to continue for only a short while.

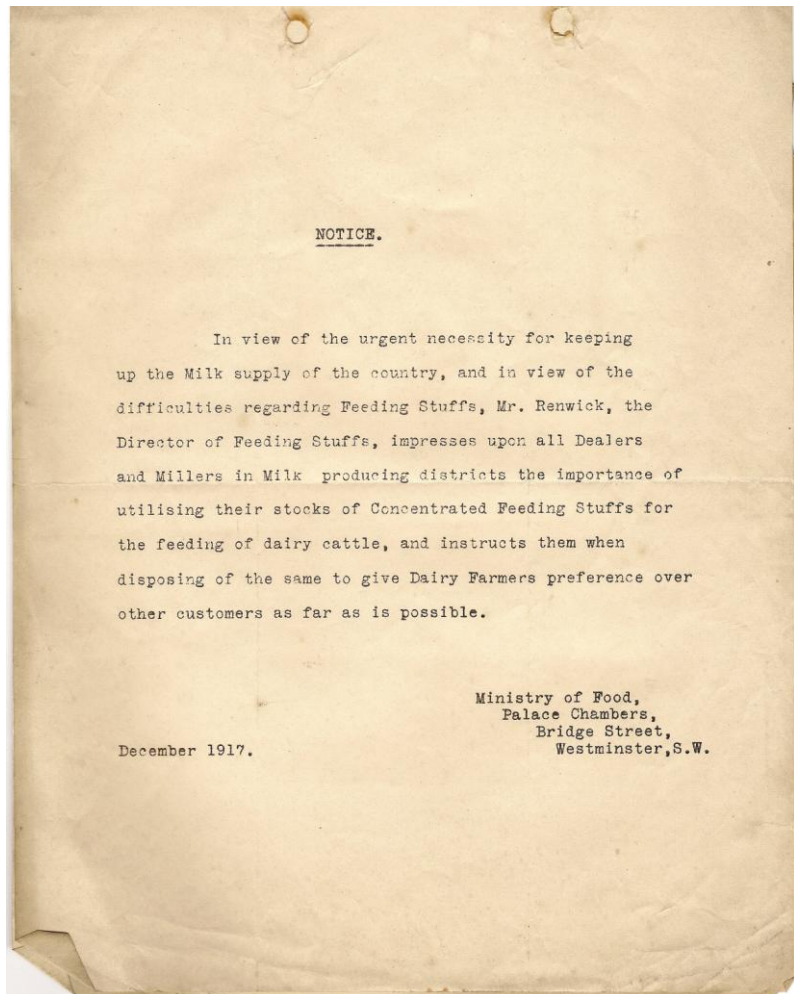
---

<sup>113</sup> Bennett Brook's War Diary has survived and is in the possession of the Brook family. The Diary covers the period between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 22 October 1918 and tells of Bennett's life and experiences on the WWI front line for many of those months. It is a remarkable document carefully and expertly researched and transcribed by Eric Walker, Bennett's son in law and the husband of Bessie (nee Brook) who is one of Bennett's three daughters.



In Bennett's absence his father, Fredrick, continued to tend the farm and his work as a cattle dealer. This was War time farming and subject to many Government strictures and checks to ensure that farms were operated efficiently and effectively and in the interests of the war effort.

This included controls on the buying and selling of crops and foodstuffs. As can be seen opposite the letter from the Ministry of Food<sup>114</sup> in December 1917 makes reference to difficulties regarding foodstuffs which were beginning to have an effect on milk production. One of the measures taken was to "instruct" dealers in foodstuffs to give preference to Dairy Farmers. In 1910 Sowood Farm was described as a milk farm and probably continued to be so during the 1914-1918 conflict.



In May 1922 Bennett married Mabel Wormald, who he had been courting before the War and with whom he remained in contact whilst serving in France during 1918. Mabel was an "athletic machinist" and daughter of Joseph Wormald who ran his photographic business from Dale Street Ossett. Bennett and Mabel had four children, Dora (born 1924), Bessie (1925), Joyce (1926) and David Brook (1928). Bennett's family however never lived at Sowood Farm but lived instead in the 1920's and early 1930's at nearby Crown Street and Horbury Road before moving to a rented house closer to Sowood Farm in the mid 1930's. This house – Rock Cottage - was situated on the opposite side of Sowood bend to the Farm and had been built in the 1860's by George Mitchell and his wife Sarah Ann (nee Marsden)

Perhaps unbeknown to the Brook family at the time, Sarah Ann was an ancestral relation of the Brooks and she and her husband are shown on the 1861 Census living and working Sowood Farm. Prior to 1861 they lived at a dwelling just south of the site which became the Tram Sheds and they probably worked and lived at Sowood Farm whilst awaiting completion of the house which Bennett moved to in the mid 1930's. This rented house was demolished in the 1960's. The house was known as *Rock Cottage*, not to be confused with the 18<sup>th</sup> Century dwelling situated slightly further to south west which went by the name of *The Rocks* and today is known as *Rock Cottages*<sup>115</sup>.

---

<sup>114</sup> Courtesy of Ruth Nettleton

<sup>115</sup> See *The History of the Rocks – Rock Cottages* [Alan Howe 2012]

Mention has been made elsewhere of Bene't Brook's son Eli Brook (1854-1923). Eli died on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1923, aged 69 and Probate was granted in London to his son (Frederick) Joseph Brook. In the Probate Calender, Eli is described as being of "Sowood Farm Ossett" and it is supposed that this was no more than an accommodation address for his affairs to be notified and settled.



Photograph showing 1Tram Shed; 2 Sowood Farm; 3 Sowood Bend; 4 Rock Cottage –built by Sarah Mitchell (nee Marsden) & subsequent home of Bennett Brook but now demolished<sup>116</sup>

Bennett's father, Fredrick Brook, died on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1936 at Sowood Farm but his wife Lilly Brook continued to live at the Farm until her death there, aged 92, on 29th September 1957. Throughout most of her last 20 years whilst living at Sowood farm she had a live in "helper" and her son Bennett and his family lived close by at Rock Cottage. Fredrick's 1911 Will left his effects and real estate in trust to his wife Lilly but his Will was that Bennett be employed as farm manager on pay plus 5% of the farm profits. Bennett also had an option to purchase any part of his father's estate from the trustees.

Bennett Brook started a *Farm Account and Diary Book* on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1936 – the day of his father's death. On that day the record shows..."A Barker & F Dixon drilled & harrowed low Storrs Hill field with wheat" The Account Book covers the period 1936 to 1992 and whilst coverage varies from year to year it is a valuable record of the acreage worked from Sowood, the crops grown, the men employed, the animals kept and the agricultural returns made. It is difficult to do justice to the detail in the 280 page record but the following extracts seek to highlight some key points as they relate to Sowood Farm.

---

<sup>116</sup> Photograph courtesy Wakefield Libraries annotations by Neville Ashby



During the period 1936 to 1992 the farm holding comprised both rented and Brook family owned land. In 1936 the total holding extended to 136 acres never dropping below 100 acres until the early 1970's when it fell to about 90 and remained fairly constant thereafter. Acquisitions of land during the Fredrick and Bennett Brook years had, by the 1950's brought the owned land holding element of this total to 70-75 acres. The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century total land holding of about 90-130 acres mirrored the earlier size of the farm during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The land holdings included fields in Healey to the west, Ossett Spa and Spring End in the east, and Horbury Bridge and Storrs Hill to the south. Several of these fields were worked by the early Marsdens in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The nature of the farm during this period also has echoes of earlier times when the nature of the farming was mixed - arable and stock. 20<sup>th</sup> Century cropping included peas, beans, mangolds, turnips, potatoes, rhubarb, kale, oats, barley and wheat with grass pasture and mowing noted activities. Most of the root crop would be for stock feed. In the earliest part of the record (1937-38) up to six hands were employed on the farm with Bennett. Albert Barker and Fred Dixon (and later W Saynor) appear as regulars working with a pair of horses, Boxer and Major, planting and harrowing. Hired hands (D Driver, W Barker, G Hutton, Allen, Fisher and J Sykes) assisted at planting and harvest time. A regular activity was hauling manure to fields, including those worked by other families, and there are instances of manure being hauled to the farm.

The Account Book stirs memories of Bennett's War diaries in its attention to detail. In June 1936 he records a farm equipment inventory as follows;

*Implements at Harrop's Buildings* – 1 weighing machine, 3 56lbs, 2 28lbs, 1 4lb, 1 14 lb weights, 2 dry pig feeders, 1 horse rake, 1 potato sorting machine, 2 potato shovels, 30 4 score hampers, 1 turnip drill, 1 cart, 2 waggons.

*Implements at Harrop's shed* – 1 potato spinner, 1 set of potato harrows, 1 set of ox(?) harrows, 2 horse hoes, set of spring harrows, flat roller, cook plough,

*Implements at shed at Horbury Bridge* – 1 self binder, 1 mowing machine, 1 ring roller, 1 ridge roller, 1 swathe turner, 2 sets of 5 round harrows, 1 digger plough, 1 double furrow plough, 1 seed fur plough, 1 set chain harrows, 1 set small seed harrows, 1 set of corn seed harrows, 1 set of Chesil harrows, 1 corn drill, 1 hay sweep.

*Implements at shed at home* - 2 wagons, 2 carts, 1 dry pig feeder, 1 ridging plough

Detailed manuscripts of his Returns to various Ministries include;

*Claims for Cereal Deficiency* (1960's & 1970's- showing about 30 acres laid to barley),  
*Stock* (1969 – showing Dairying as the main activity with cattle, pigs, and poultry for eggs, table and breeding)

*Selective Employment Tax* ( 1966 total acreage 94.5 acres – number of employees 2-3 & one man Saturday afternoons not all Saturdays and evenings hay time & harvest

*Agricultural Census* (1944) 5200 gallons of milk sold Jun-Aug, 51 cows, 49 calves, 2 pigs, 4 horses for agricultural work, 45 fowls over six months and 30 ducks & geese, 5 regular workers.

*Agricultural Census (1960's* – for example December 1966) – 80 cows and steers with some in milk, some in calf, 56 pigs over 2 months/under 5 months, 150 pullets from point of lay to first moult, 200 hens after first moult, 150 other fowls, 120 turkeys [In total 620 birds] Total acreage of crops & grass = 94.5 acres – 32 acres out to land for hay [60 tons of hay made in 1966]. 3 workers.

In 1962 the same Agricultural Census Return (December) records 110 acres, similar cattle, pig & turkey stock levels but 50% fewer hens. Equipment recorded are 2 tractor ploughs, ridging plough, tractor mounted cultivator, corn drill, fertiliser drill, manure spreader, wagon, motor lorry over two ton, tractor trailers.

Several of the Returns in the early 1960's record the name of the Farmer as "B Brook senior partner, F Brook & Son" and in response to the Ministry question "where is herd kept" the response is Manor Farm Ossett Yorkshire. By this time Bennett was living at nearby Manor House Manor Lane whilst his son David was living at Sowood Farm. A 1950 Return records both Sowood Farm and "Manor Farm" occupied by F Brook & Son with Sowood Farm the address of the owner of the cattle herd and Manor Farm the location of the herd. F Brook as has been recorded died in 1936 but his name lived on in the name of the business.

So the Farm Account Book goes on preserving manuscripts of Returns for Capitation Bonus, notifications for Ploughing out Grass, Application for grant for Ditching, Application for Petrol (1957), Application for Calf Subsidy, Applications for feeding stuffs.....

This is a remarkable record of life and work on a 20<sup>th</sup> Century mixed farm in the West Riding of Yorkshire recording much more than can be revealed in these pages

Bennett worked the farm with his son David helping during the 1939-45 WWII conflict. The following summary is taken from the National Archives where the WWII National Farm Surveys can be examined.<sup>117</sup>

*When the Second World War began in September 1939, Britain was faced with an urgent need to increase home food production, as imports of food and fertilisers were drastically cut. The area of land under cultivation had to be increased significantly and quickly. Under Defence (General) Regulation 49 the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries was empowered to set up County War Agricultural Executive Committees ('County War Ags') to which the authority to increase food production was delegated. The Committees had powers to direct what was grown, to take possession of land, to terminate tenancies, to inspect property, and to organise mobile groups of farm workers. Much of the day-to-day work of the Committees was executed by district committees and sub-committees while the Executive Committee itself maintained a general supervisory role.*

*One of the first responsibilities of the County War Ags was to direct a ploughing-up campaign under which large expanses of grassland (in some areas land that had not seen the plough since medieval or even prehistoric times) were prepared for cultivation. To assist in this campaign, in June 1940 a farm survey was initiated with the immediate purpose of increasing food production. Farms were classified in terms of their productive state, A, B, or C; these categories related more to the physical condition of the land than to the managerial efficiency (or otherwise) of the farmer. However, it was also vital to assess the ability of each farmer to play his part in the national food production plan, and in cases of gross inefficiency or dereliction, land was taken into the control of the Committees and labour organised accordingly. Between June 1940 and the early months of 1941 some 85% of the agricultural area was surveyed - all but the smallest farms.*

*Once the short-term objective of increasing food production had been met, thought was given to implementing a more general National Farm Survey with a longer-term purpose of providing data that would form the basis of post-war planning. Such a survey was seen at the time as a 'Second Domesday Book', a 'permanent and comprehensive record of the conditions on the farms of England and Wales'. This National Farm Survey was begun in the spring of 1941 and largely completed by the end of 1943. It was undertaken by the district committees made up largely of experienced, practical farmers who visited and inspected each farm and interviewed the farmer*

*This was one of the most controversial parts of the Survey, and the one for which the Survey is often remembered. It was here that the recorder had to classify the farm as A, B, or C, and if B or C were due to 'personal failings' he was also obliged to supply additional details. There was a change in emphasis from the A, B, and C classification of the 1940 survey (see previously) which had related primarily to the physical condition of the farm. The classification now referred much more to the*

---

<sup>117</sup> The individual farm records of the National Farm Survey, 1941-1943 form the National Archives record series [MAF 32](#).

management condition of the farm, i.e. how a farmer managed his resources - well (A); fairly (B); or badly (C). Of the 300,000 farms and holdings classified by the Survey, 58% were A, 37% B, and 5% C.

*B or C categories could be given for reasons of old age and lack of capital. If accorded for reasons of personal failings, then these might be amplified as due to (a) physical incapacity brought about by poor health, loss of limbs, or the decease of a farmer leaving his widow to carry on; (b) mental imperfections, such as lack of ambition, stupidity, laziness, and ignorance; and (c) weaknesses of the flesh, such as drunkenness.*

Bennett continued to work Sowood Farm as a tenant farmer until 1948 when the opportunity arose for him to purchase the Farm and other land at Hallcliffe which he worked as part of the holding. Since 1904, when his mother, Frances, transferred ownership to him, Captain Lionel Richard James Scholefield Battye had retained ownership of Sowood farm and some of the associated lands. Captain Battye, 13<sup>th</sup> Hussars of Skelton Hall and Crosland Grange, a bachelor, died on 15th May 1947 and his Executors set about disposing of his land interests in 1948.

On 27<sup>th</sup> September 1948<sup>118</sup> Bennett Brook of Sowood Farm purchased the following land and property from David Bibby and John Wormald, who were Captain Battye's Executors;

*First, all that part farmhouse cottage (formerly two cottages but some time ago converted into one) and farm buildings together with land thereto belonging known as Sowood Farm situated on Sowood Road formerly in the occupation of one Fredrick Brook but now of the purchaser the land being formerly described as 16 acres but the whole by recent admeasurement having been found to contain 15 acres 1 rood 35 perches*

*Secondly all those five closes comprising 16 acres 3 roods and 29 perches situated at Spring End (also sometimes called Hallcliffe shown on the Ordnance Survey as numbers 1,2,4,5,327 & 328 formerly occupied by Mr Heptonstall now occupied by Reuben Dews*

More than 250 years earlier this same Sowood land had been worked by Francisci Marsden, the builder of Sowood Farm and the Hallcliffe land was probably the same land which was held by Francis's son Guilielmus (William) Marsden. During the intervening years both parcels of land had many tenant farmers but few owners and both areas of land were back in the hands of the family who owned them in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1951 David Brook married Dorothy Ingham and they lived at Barmby Fold off Manor Road Ossett. Their first child Christine was born in 1955. The 1950's were to see more changes for the Brook family. Around the time of his mother, Lilly's, death on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1957 at the age of 92, Bennett and his wife Mabel, moved from Rock Cottage to the Manor House<sup>119</sup> on Manor Lane Ossett (and subsequently to Queens Drive) and David and Dorothy and Christine moved to Sowood farm. In 1958 their only son Peter Bennett Brook was born and named after his grandfather, Bennett Brook (1891-1980), in the same way that Bennett was named after his grandfather, Bene't Brook (1825-1913).

The land immediately adjacent to Sowood Farm comprises about 16 acres but invariably over the centuries the farm holding has been increased by working other land in the vicinity and, over time, the Farm holding has varied between 30 and about 100 acres. In the 1980's David and Dorothy Brook began to contemplate improvements to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century working Farmhouse at Sowood and in 1981 they were visited by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England<sup>120</sup>.

---

<sup>118</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Deeds Registry Deed reference 145 17 8 registered 27 Sept 1948

<sup>119</sup> Built in the 1860's by Mark Wilby who ran Manor Mills opposite to his house. The Manor House gets its name from being situated on Manor Lane. More about the Manor House can be seen on <https://ossettheritage.co.uk/local-history/overview/>

<sup>120</sup> Merged with English Heritage on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999. See page 89 for the 1981 report on the Farm




## Grade II Listed Building May 1988

The 1981 Royal Commission visit may have been the trigger for the farmhouse to be listed and on 6th May 1988, one year short of its three hundredth birthday, the Farmhouse was Grade II Listed. But even the 1988 listing documentation<sup>121</sup> left unanswered questions about the identity of the builder of the Farmhouse and the building itself.

The documentation, all of which is reproduced below from English Heritage websites, includes reference to the lintel/datestone above the south facing front door of the Farmhouse which bears the initials 'FM' and the date '1689'. Between these two markings there is barely legible lettering which the listing has variously reported as being the word 'flackender' and 'F Mackender'. The listing attributes the building of the 1689 Farmhouse to a person of the same name and records that... *The present house built in 1689 by F Mackender incorporates a timber partition between the body of the house and the outshot (1-2)*

### SOWOOD FARMHOUSE



**ABOUT THIS MONUMENT** + / -

EH Visitor Information	✘	More Pictures	✘	Monument Types	✔
Related Monuments	✘	<a href="#">Modern Map</a>	✔	<a href="#">Sources</a>	✔
<a href="#">Related Text</a>	✔	<a href="#">Old Map</a>	✔	<a href="#">Thesaurus</a>	✔
Investigation History	✘	<a href="#">Aerial Photograph</a>	✔	<a href="#">Description</a>	✔

**DESCRIPTION** + / -

Built in 1689, on the site of a Medieval manor extant in 1302, possibly reusing timbers from the manor house.

[back to top](#)

**DETAIL** + / -

**MORE INFORMATION & SOURCES** + / -

SE 2850 1905. Sowood Farm, Ossett. Work has revealed substantial rafters which probably came from the buildings of the Medieval manorial centre which is known to have existed on the site from at least 1302. The present house, built in 1689 by F Mackender, incorporates a timber-framed partition between the body of the house and the outshot. (1-2)

Sowood Farmhouse. Grade II. (3)

**SOURCE TEXT**

**(1) Annual newsheet/CBA Group 4**  
1986 (DJH Michelmores) Page(s)42

**(3) List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**  
DOE (Listed Buildings) Boro of Wakefield, W Yorks 6-May-1988 20

[www.pastscape.org.uk](http://www.pastscape.org.uk)

<sup>121</sup> The Sources quoted by the Listing authorities are *Annual newsheet CBA Group 4 (1986 DJH Moorhouse) page(s) 42* & *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest DOE (Listed Buildings) Boro of Wakefield, W Yorks 6-May-1988*



© Mr John Ulrick LRPS

IoE Number: 342524  
 Location: SOWOOD FARMHOUSE, SOWOOD LANE (east side)  
 OSSETT, WAKEFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE  
 Photographer: Mr John Ulrick LRPS  
 Date Photographed: 07 July 2000  
 Date listed: 06 May 1988  
 Date of last amendment: 06 May 1988  
 Grade: II

The Images of England website consists of images of listed buildings based on the statutory list as it was in 2001 and does not incorporate subsequent amendments to the list. For the statutory list and information on the current listed status of individual buildings please go to [The National Heritage List for England](http://www.nationalheritage.org.uk).

SE21NE OSSETT SOWOOD LANE (east side), South Ossett

SE21NE OSSETT SOWOOD LANE (east side), South Ossett 6/31 Sowood Farmhouse - II Farmhouse. Dated 1689 with C19 alterations. Coursed squared stone with quoins. Stone slate roof. 2-storey, 3-bay front. Central, quoined doorway with Tudor-arched lintel with sunk spandrels. Raised letters read: "FM (F. flackender) 1689". 4-pane C19 sashes in plain surrounds except ground-floor left: a 4-light double-chamfered window, mullions removed. Central rendered stack. Rear outshut. One blocked double-chamfered 2-light window to 1st floor left return. Interior: timber framing between house and outshut.

[www.pastscape.org.uk](http://www.pastscape.org.uk)

## Sowood Farm

**County:** Wakefield

**District:** WAKEFIELD

**Parish:** OSSETT

**Monument Number:** ( SE 21 NE 49 )

POST MEDIEVAL **FARMHOUSE**  
 1689 - 1689

POST MEDIEVAL **FARMHOUSE**  
 1800 - 1899



Copyright: Mr John Ulrick LRPS

Farmhouse built in 1689, with 19th century alterations.

### Sources

**List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**

District of Wakefield, 06/05/1988

[www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)



## Sowood Farmhouse

**County:** Wakefield

**District:** WAKEFIELD

**Parish:** OSSETT

**Monument Number:** ( SE 21 NE 12 )

MEDIEVAL Â **MANOR HOUSE** Â 1302 -

POST MEDIEVAL Â **FARMHOUSE** Â  
1689 -

Built in 1689, on the site of a Medieval manor extant in 1302, possibly reusing timbers from the manor house.

### Sources

**Annual newsheet/CBA Group 4**

1986 (DJH Michelmore)

**List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**

DOE (Listed Buildings) Boro of Wakefield, W Yorks 6-May-1988 20

[www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)

Had the listing sources called upon the Horbury local historian , Ken Bartlett, he would have told them that <sup>122</sup> ‘ *The Marsden family.....from Ossett, mainly from Sowood Farm, just over the Ossett Horbury boundary. The lintel over the front doorway has the initials of the Marsden family and a late seventeenth Century date*’ Ken Bartlett, of course, was correct and this research has taken his work a step or two further and identified the builder as Francis Marsden. As for the barely legible lettering on the lintel above the doorway it reads neither flackender nor Mackender but **Marsden**.



The listing also states that ‘*work has revealed substantial rafters which probably came from the buildings of the Medieval manorial centre which is known to have existed on the site from at least 1302*’

---

<sup>122</sup> Ken Bartlett Wakefield and Horbury



Whilst it *may* be the case that a *manorial centre* existed on the site it is by no means certain. The evidence for this suggestion appears to be based upon 14<sup>th</sup> Century Wakefield Court Rolls which refer to Sowood and to farming activity. The listing of the Farmhouse is based upon the following:-

**“Ossett, Sowood, Farm, West Yorkshire, (SE 28451903):** D.J.H. Michelmore of Historic Building Specialists Ltd. Reports that work at Sowood Farm has revealed substantial rafters which probably came from the buildings of the medieval manorial centre which is known to have existed on the site from at least 1302 (see *West Yorkshire: an archaeological survey to A.D. 1500*, p.471). The present house, built in 1689 by F. Mackender, incorporates a timber-framed partition between the body of the house and the outshot.”<sup>123</sup>

Leaving aside the fact that the 1689 farmhouse was not built by F Mackender, the publication - *West Yorkshire: an archaeological survey to AD 1500* - referred to above, claims, *inter alia*, that the largest freeholding in Ossett was the Manor of Sowood and that the manor is *now represented by Sowood Farm*. That there was farming at Sowood is not in dispute and aerial photographs suggest medieval farming activity adjacent to the existing farmstead but this is doubtful evidence of the existence of a manor house, or a manorial centre, on the site.

The rafters may be from the dwelling, *Sowood House*, which it is now known stood on the site in 1676. This earlier building may have been of timber construction and the timber framing in the 1689 farmhouse between the body of the house and the outshot is also probably from that earlier building. This may suggest a 1689 rebuild rather than a new build. It is also possible that, before 1676, the building had earlier been a manor house or a part of a manorial centre but it is difficult to conclude, with any certainty, that this was the case.

Other evidence suggests<sup>124</sup> that the manor *may* have been located further west possibly with a Manor House, just south of *Sowood Green* on a lane off Storrs Hill Road (near Ossett Academy) which had 121 acres adjoining. A dwelling known in 1850 as the “Manor House”, built in 1684<sup>125</sup> and demolished in 1958/59, stood in that position. This dwelling was built on land which was owned by Edward Oates in 1775<sup>126</sup> and his father, William Oates, was recorded in 1709 as the *Lord of the Manor of South wood green*. The Oates ownership in this location stretched to 121 acres and includes field names commonly found in manorial and private estates or parks. In 1349 the Manor was described as a carucate of land ie 120-180 acres which is similar in size to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century ownership of the Oates family.

Unlike Sowood Farm, this location is also adjacent to *South wood green* or Sowood Green which is known to have been populated in earlier times and it was usual for workers’ dwellings to be close to the Manor. Aerial photographs also show signs of medieval farming activity adjacent to this site. It is by no means certain that the Storrs Hill Road building and the associated Oates landholding was the site of Sowood Manor but its credentials are at least as worthy of further research and consideration as the Sowood Farm site.

By 1987 the Horbury company, Historic Buildings Company Ltd, had completed refurbishment work to the Farmhouse and the attached article<sup>127</sup> from the Ossett Observer told its readers something of the history of Sowood Farm. As we have seen earlier not all of the Ossett Observer article was correct.

---

<sup>123</sup> Annual Newsheet CBA/Group 4 1986 DJH Michelmore Page(s) 42

<sup>124</sup> The manor of South wood Green [Alan Howe 2013]

<sup>125</sup> The dwelling’s door lintel had a date stone “1684” and the initials “EG”

<sup>126</sup> Ossett Valuation 1775

<sup>127</sup> Courtesy of Neville Ashby

HOW many farms, I wonder, can boast a history going back 700 years?

Not very many, I would suggest, but that is in fact the case with Sowood Farm, perched on the Ossett-Horbury boundary.

Restoration work on the farmhouse has just been completed by David Michelmore and his band of experts, Historic Buildings Specialists Ltd., who work from Horbury Hall in Church Street.

In the course of the work, timber framing between the main body of the house and the lean-to rear outshot has been uncovered, along with a 17th-century spice box built into the wall under the stair.

This would originally have been located inside the big timber smokehood which would have been in existence before the present brick chimney.

The present house was built in 1689 by "F. Mackender" and is one of the earliest stone houses in the area. Most of its rafters are of massive oak, which must originally have belonged to a medieval building on the site.

Mr Michelmore says the site itself is interesting —

"Sowood" means "south wood" and refers to the long-since felled South Wood of Ossett which existed there in the early Middle Ages.

The house on the site probably started as the home farm for the Horbury family to whom it belonged until Sir John de Horbury gave it to John, seventh Earl of Warenne and Surrey in 1302.

The Earl granted it back to Sir John for life and, after his death in 1304, it became a farm of John, eighth and last Earl Warenne, until 1315.

### By Eddie Walker

Earl John would have continued to hold it, but after having abducted the Countess of Lancaster, he was forced to grant Sowood, together with the rest of the Manor of Wakefield, for life, to Thomas, Earl of Lancaster.

Sowood was corruptly administered by the "graves" of Horbury — the local officials of the Manor of Wakefield — and after the defeat and execution of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster in 1322 the farm was leased for the first time.

The successive "graves" of Horbury had failed to gather in hay and crops from the farm and had threshed the lord's corn in the barn there for their own use.

Such was the early history of the site. Apart from the huge rafters, which probably belonged to a building standing at Sowood in the Middle Ages, there have been discoveries relating to a more recent period.

Sowood Farm is the home of Mr and Mrs David Brook, and Mrs Brook has carefully collected all the objects which had fallen under floors or behind window seats in the centuries after the house was built.

The earliest of these is a farthing of William III, minted in the 1690s — not long after the present house was built. She has found 19 stone marbles underneath a window seat on which children must have been playing with them in the 18th century.

Other finds are the bowl of a Freemason's pipe and two small engraved plaques, one of brass and the other of silvered metal, which must have decorated something in the Georgian or Regency period.

### Ossett Observer article 1987



Above. Some of the many artefacts found in the Farmhouse by Dorothy Brook. A home made domino, bone dice, marbles and a bead with a draught and a small toy plate- which may be 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The finds also included several coins including a William III farthing in “used” condition but the coin was only minted in 1695, 1696 and 1697. Its condition is such that it had been well used over the years but in mint condition it would have appeared as below<sup>128</sup>



A brief return to 1981 and the Royal Commission report (shown below) throws light on some of the changes to the Farmhouse over the 300 years of its existence.

---

<sup>128</sup> Courtesy of Neville Ashby



Sowood Farm, Ossett (SE284190)

This is a stone house, dated 1689 but much altered in the 19th century. The house faces south, is of two storeys, and is built of coursed rubble masonry, rusticated at the angles.

The south front retains some of its original detail. One window retains the surround and central mullion of a four-light opening; the rest of the windows on this front are 19th century in date, with only disturbances in the masonry to show where the earlier openings were located. The central doorway appears to be in its original position, for there is no sign that it has been moved at a later date. The surround has a broad chamfer and a square lintel. The chamfer is taken round the lintel ~~to give a surround to a date panel; the date is 1689 and the initials of the builder appear above ( FM ).~~

It is clear that the outshut behind the west cell is an addition, for there is a straight joint between main span and outshut on the west gable. The east gable, however, has no straight joint, and despite some rebuilding in this area it is likely that there always was an outshut behind the east cell. The extent of the outshut is not clear, for a later farm building obscures the western part of the north wall, hiding any possible straight joint between original outshut and the added western part. A thick wall internally possibly shows the line of the side wall of the original build.

The present plan of the house dates largely from the 19th century. The doorway opens into a stair hall, the side walls of which provide stacks heating the rooms to ~~either~~ east and west. All the details internally are of a late date. It is likely that the doorway opened originally directly into the main room, the housebody, probably the eastern room. The housebody was probably heated by either a stack on the east gable wall or a central stack; the latter seems the more likely, for there is no sign of a stack having been removed from the east gable. Such a central stack would have given a lobby entrance plan. It would also allow the parlour to the west to be heated also, by a fireplace in the same central stack. That the parlour was not heated by a stack on the gable wall is shown by the presence of a two-light mullioned window in the first floor of the west gable wall.

The main front, therefore, provided two rooms the housebody and the parlour. The outshut at the rear gave probably two service rooms, lit by two light mullioned windows. At the west end of the visible part of the north wall of the outshut is a raised two-light window; this probably lit the original stair.

Colum Giles, April 1981.

The single page report indicates that much of the interior of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century house had been lost sometime during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This may have been during the Nettleton years in the first half of that century since it seems less likely that the Scholefield/Battye owners, characterised by tenant farmers, had much incentive to update the building. It also seems likely the house was divided to provide two dwellings in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and this would also give rise to internal alterations during which the earlier period features would have been lost.

The comments go on to suggest that the outshut<sup>129</sup> behind the *east cell* was original. This “outshut” is the small room currently used as an office. The outshut behind the *west cell* on the other hand is thought to be a later addition. This is the room currently used as the kitchen. The thick wall which is mentioned is the wall which now has a doorway through it to the kitchen area. Both of the “outshuts” mentioned are at the rear of the Farmhouse and open onto the Farmyard through a rear door which appears to have been formed in an opening which at one time was a window (although this is not mentioned in the 1981 report)

The report continues, commenting that the internal layout of the house also dates, in the main, to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It also suggests that a raised two light window (which survives) in the north (ie rear house) wall may have provided light to the original stairway. This suggests that the present staircase would not have been in the central position seen today. Instead the front door would have opened directly to the main room – the “housebody”<sup>130</sup> which, the report suggests was probably the room at the east side of the house (but see comments re John Marsden’s 1735 Will - below). Heating at this level would be provided by a central stack or chimney which would also have provided heat to the “parlour” The 1689 house therefore would have had two ground floor *front* rooms - the larger housebody on the west and the parlour on the east.

The smaller outshut areas to the rear provided two service rooms (though the western one was an extension) and were lit by the two windows in the rear wall. The report suggests that the most westerly of these windows provided light for the original staircase. The report does not specify the location of this staircase but a curved wall within the outshuts may be a clue to its location.

In John Marsden’s Will dated 1735 he left to his wife *all that parlour at the east end of my said Messuage with a Convenient Way to the same for her habitation* The 1981 report however suggests that the **housebody** may be the room at the east side of the house but this does not appear to coincide with the 1735 Will. Moreover the external east wall of the house exhibits masonry work suggesting a doorway may once have existed at this side of the house. Much of this is now hidden by an external farm workers’ privy which appears old but is not an original part of the 1689 structure. It is possible that this doorway was constructed between 1735 and 1742 as the *convenient way* for John’s widow, Mary (nee Charlesworth) to access her parlour. If it was then the parlour, not the housebody, was positioned in the eastern segment of the farmhouse.

As indicated above the 1981 report suggests that the eastern outshut is original but that the western outshut is an extension and the straight joint in the west gable is evidence of the addition. This however would also suggest some later works to the roof of the farmhouse which is not evident from an external viewing. It is possible that the slated house roof was replaced in its entirety at some stage but in the absence of this it may be expected that there would be some evidence of the western extension at roof level. It is possible that the western outshut was constructed after the main walls of the house were built but before the farmhouse was roofed. The 1981 report suggestion that the eastern outshut is original is based upon the absence of a straight joint in the eastern wall. However the eastern wall does exhibit some signs of later masonry work which may suggest alterations

---

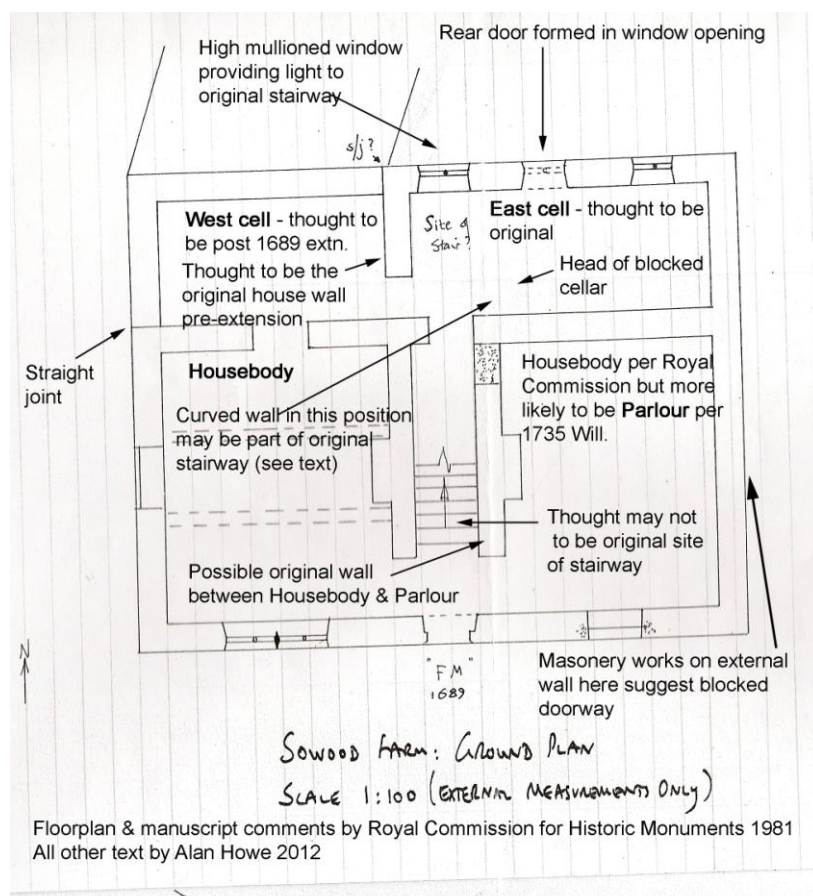
<sup>129</sup> *Outshot* - An extension

<sup>130</sup> *Housebody* - refers to the main ground floor living space excluding the parlour

between the east outshut and the main house. This may have included the shifting of the quoins from their original position to the rear of this eastern outshut. Such a conclusion could suggest that both outshuts were slightly later than the main housebody.

An examination at roof level from the east and west also reveals that the roof is longer at the rear (the north) than at the front of the farmhouse and that the roof is also less steep above the outshuts than at the eaves of the main farmhouse. Neither do the outshuts have loft space above them. To the layman this may suggest that both outshuts are slightly later additions and this may also explain the existence of the curved wall between the outshuts and main house which may at some stage have housed the original stairway.

The 1981 report makes no reference to a timber framed partition between the body of the house and the outshot and this appears to have been discovered for the first time during the 1987 refurbishment works. Unfortunately there appears to be no supporting documentary evidence as to the nature or precise location of this timber partitioning.



The time for further investigation of the house structure was during the 1987 refurbishment works undertaken by Historic Buildings Specialists Limited of Horbury. If further investigations were carried out at that time the findings appear to not to have been filed with English Heritage or the West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service and, unfortunately, all attempts to contact the Horbury Company and its successor Company have failed.

In November 1997 Wakefield MDC approved an application for the demolition of a farm building and erection of a farm worker's dwelling. The address of the single storey dwelling harks back to the very origins of the farm's location – 101 Horbury Road, Ossett and the name of the dwelling is *Southwode*

In **2012** Sowood Farm is owned and run by **Dorothy Brook** and her children **Peter Brook** and **Christine Burnell** (nee Brook). Since 1689 the Farm has been owned by the Marsden family who built it, the Nettletons who married into the Marsden family, the Scholefields and the Battyes who acquired it by default and the Brooks who tenanted and subsequently purchased it. As it turns out, the Brooks are descendants of the Marsdens and it was they who brought it back to the family who built it.

Many interesting facts have emerged during the course of the research but two family connections are particularly fascinating.

In 1593 Joanye Brouke died of the plague and was buried at Denton's House – Sowood Farm. The present Brook family are almost certainly 9<sup>th</sup> generation descendants of Joanye Brouke's family.

Moreover the study has revealed a relationship between today's owners and the 1689 builder which was unknown to the current owners of the Farm, the Brook family. The Farm was built in 1689 by Francis Marsden and one of his descendants married a Nettleton who had a daughter who married a Brook. These happy events led to Peter Brook and his sister Christine being related to Francis. In 2012 Peter and Christine are working the Farm which 323 years ago was built and worked by their 8x Great Grandfather Francis Marsden.

Alan Howe

January 2013